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THE WISDOM OF OUR FATHERS.

SELECTIONS

FROM THE

WRITINGS

OF

ROBERT SOUTH, D.D.

Editor

WITH A MEMOIR.

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MEMOIR.

THE life of South affords few materials for the biographer. Though he was by no means a recluse student, his career was singularly uneventful, and his character comes out far more vividly in his discourses than in his life.

He was born at Hackney in 1633. His father was an eminent and wealthy London merchant. On the mother's side he descended from a good Kentish family named Berry. Having distinguished himself by the success with which he prosecuted his studies at various preparatory schools, he was entered, as King's scholar, at Westminster, in the year 1647, under Dr. Busby, "who cultivated and improved so promising a genius, with such industry and encouragement for four years, that after the expiration of that time, he was admitted student of Christ Church, Oxford, A.D. 1651."*

* This, and other extracts marked with inverted commas, are quoted from the very diffuse and rambling biography prefixed to the first collected edition of his works, published in 1717, the year after his death.

During his first year at Westminster it fell to his lot to read Latin prayers in the school on the day of the execution of King Charles. With extraordinary courage for so young a boy—he was only fifteen—he prayed for the king by name. It says something for the moderation of the new rulers that he was allowed to pass without molestation.

He had as class-mate at Westminster John Locke, who was elected with him to the Christ Church scholarship, and they went up together. The character, associates, and pursuits of the two men were, however, so entirely dissimilar, that there could hardly have been much familiarity between them at any time, and their friendship must soon have terminated.

In 1654 he took his degree of B.A., and wrote a Latin poem in praise of Cromwell on the occasion of the conclusion of peace with the Dutch. The panegyric gained the prize, and was deemed of sufficient merit to be published by the University. In after years this did not escape the notice of his enemies, who took occasion, from it, to charge him with inconsistency and time-serving. But, whatever South's faults may have been, these were not among them; and the act admits of simple and satisfactory explanation. The subject was prescribed for a prize poem by the authorities, and South competed as a mere academical exercise. This did not of necessity imply approval of the acts of the Protector. Besides which, those who opposed Cromwell's usurpation, and were

most strenuous in maintaining the royal cause, might yet admire and be proud of the foreign policy of a government which raised England into the very first position amongst the great powers of Europe.

About the same time he wrote a Latin poem entitled *Musica Incantans*, which however he did not print till the year 1667. It was very highly applauded "as the work of an extraordinary genius and a very ready wit, for the beauty of its language and the quickness of its turns." South, however, "to his dying day regretted the publication of it as a juvenile and unmomentary performance." It is now very rare. There is a copy of it in the British Museum. But it is deservedly forgotten, as its author wished it to be.

That South did not disguise or dissemble his sentiments as a Royalist and Episcopalian is evident from a characteristic incident recorded of him at this period. John Owen, then Vice-Chancellor of the University, was informed that many of the graduates and undergraduates were in the habit of worshipping according to the forms of the Church of England, which had recently been interdicted. He sent for South, one of the number, and, after a severe reprimand, threatened to expel him if the practice were persisted in, adding, "He could do no less in gratitude to his Highness, the Protector, and his other great friends who had thought him worthy of the dignities he then stood possessed of." South replied that, "Gratitude

among friends is like credit amongst tradesmen, it keeps the business up and maintains the correspondence ; and we pay not merely out of a principle that we ought to discharge our debt, but to secure ourselves a place to be trusted another time." And in reply to a further reference to the Protector and other great men of the Republican party, he retorted, "Commonwealths put a value upon men as well as upon money, and we are forced to take them both, not by weight, but according as they are pleased to stamp them, and at the current rate." This bold language was certainly not that of a time-server.

In 1657 South received his degree of M.A., and the following year was ordained by one of the deprived bishops. The first of his published sermons was preached by him before the Judges at Oxford in 1659. It is on the text : *But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven.** The introduction is admirable :

"As the great comprehensive Gospel duty is the denial of self, so the grand Gospel sin that confronts it is the denial of Christ. These two are both the commanding and the dividing principles of all our actions : for whosoever acts in opposition to one, does it always in behalf of the other. None ever opposed Christ, but it was to gratify self ; none ever renounced the interest of self, but from a prevailing love to the interest of Christ. The subject I have here pitched upon may seem improper in these times, and in this place, where the number of professors and of men is the same ; where the cause and interest of Christ has been so cried up ; and Christ's personal reign and kingdom so called for and expected. But since it has been still preached up, but acted down, and

* Matt. x. 33.

dealt with as the eagle in the fable did with the oyster, carrying it up on high, that by letting it fall he might dash it to pieces :—I say, since Christ must reign, but his truths be made to serve, I suppose it is but reason to distinguish between profession and pretence, and to conclude that men's present crying, 'Hail, king,' and bending the knee to Christ, are only in order to his future crucifixion."

In the year 1660, he was appointed Public Orator to the University, after delivering one of his most remarkable discourses—that on the *Scribe Instructed*. It was preached before the Royal Commissioners from the words, *Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.** The Restoration had set him at liberty to utter sarcasm and invective unsparingly against his opponents ; and he availed himself of the opportunity to an extent which precludes the possibility of including the discourse in this volume. Of its eloquence and vigour the following extract may serve as an illustration. He is insisting upon the necessity of habitual preparation, by study and meditation, on the part of the preacher :

" Powers act but weakly and irregularly till they are heightened and perfected by their habits. A well radicated habit in a lively, vegete faculty, is like an apple of gold in a picture of silver ; it is perfection upon perfection, it is a coat of mail upon our armour, and, in a word, it is the raising the soul at least one story higher. For take off but these wheels, and the powers in all their operations will drive but heavily. Now it is not enough to have books, or for a man to have his divinity in his pocket, or upon the shelf, but he must have mastered his notions till

* Matt. xiii. 52.

they even incorporate into his mind, so as to be able to produce and wield them upon all occasions ; and not when a difficulty is proposed, and a performance enjoined, to say that he will consult such and such authors ; for this is not to be a divine, who is rather to be a walking library than a walking index. As to go no farther than the similitude in the text, we should not account him a good or generous housekeeper who should not have always something of standing provision by him, so as never to be so surprised, but that he should still be found able to treat his friend at least, though perhaps not always presently to feast him. So the scribe here spoken of should have an inward, lasting fullness and sufficiency to support and bear him up, especially where present performance urges, and actual preparation can be but short. Thus it is not the oil in the wick but in the vessel which must feed the lamp. The former indeed may cause a present blaze, but it is the latter which must give it a lasting light. It is not the spending money a man has in his pocket, but his hoards in the chest or in the bank, which must make him rich. A dying man has his breath in his nostrils, but to have it in the lungs is that which must preserve life. Nor will it suffice to have raked up a few notions here and there, or to rally up all one's little utmost into one discourse, which can constitute a divine, or give a man stock enough to set up with ; any more than a soldier who had filled his knapsack should thereupon set up for keeping house. No ; a man would then quickly be drained, his short stock would serve but for one meeting in ordinary converse, and he would be in danger of meeting with the same company twice. And, therefore, there must be store, plenty, and a treasure, lest he turn broker in divinity, and having run the rounds of a beaten, exhausted common-place, be forced to stand still, or go the same round over again, pretending to his auditors that it is profitable for them to hear the same truths often inculcated to them ; though, I humbly conceive, that to inculcate the same truths is not of necessity to repeat the same words. And, therefore, to avoid such beggarly pretences there must be an habitual preparation as to the work we are now speaking of."

Shortly after this Lord Clarendon, Lord High Chancellor of England and Chancellor of the Univer-

sity of Oxford, appointed him his private chaplain. In March, 166 $\frac{2}{3}$, he was installed Prebendary of Westminster, and in October of the same year he obtained the degree of doctor of divinity. There was some opposition to this degree being granted, on the ground that he was a graduate of only six years' standing. This difficulty was, however, overruled, in consideration of South's distinguished attainments and abilities. In December, 1670, he was installed a canon of Christ Church, Oxford.

A few years later he was presented by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster to the rectory of Islip, in Oxfordshire. As he enjoyed an adequate income from other sources, he munificently settled the whole proceeds of the living upon the parish for his life. One half he gave to the curate, the other half he expended in educating and apprenticing the children of his parishioners. The chancel had fallen into a ruinous condition : this he entirely rebuilt. The rectory was small and inconvenient : he built a new one. His first biographer quaintly says of this act of generosity, " He likewise having found the mansion house belonging to the rector much too mean for the largeness of the stipend, and having heard of the honour done to that village by the birth of Edward the Confessor (as that king himself declares in his charter, whereby he gives that village and other lands thereunto adjacent to St. Peter's Church in Westminster), caused the shattered remains of it to be totally pulled down, and

an edifice erected in a more convenient part of the town; the land upon which he built it, with a handsome garden, he purchased as a perpetual mansion for himself and successors, which may now vie with most parsonage houses in England, as may be seen in Dr. White Kennet's *Parochial Antiquities*, wherein he gives a view of it in a plate inscribed to Dr. South, whose coat of arms is engraved over it with this inscription, '*Vire Reverendo Roberto South, S.T. P., Rectori Ecclesiæ de Islip, Tabulam hanc quæ amplum et Elegantem Rectoriæ Mansum suis impensis constructum Representat, D. D. White Kennet. Nos admiremur, imitentur Posterî.*' "

In June, 1677, Laurence Hyde, son of the Earl of Clarendon, and subsequently Lord Rochester, was despatched to the continent on a visit of ceremony, to congratulate John Sobieski on his election to the crown of Poland, and to convey presents to his daughter, the Princess Teresa Cunegunda, to whom Charles II. had been godfather. The embassy was one of great splendour, "and Mr. Hyde, out of his very great respect to Dr. South, who had endeared himself to that noble person by being his tutor, would needs take him with him, in the quality of chaplain, which the doctor very readily agreed to, being of a very curious and inquisitive temper, and desirous of being an eye-witness of the posture of affairs in other countries as well as his own." This embassy occupied about six months, and he published the results

of his shrewd observations and diligent enquiries in the form of a letter to his friend Dr. Pococke, the eminent Hebrew scholar. His remarks on the condition of theological study amongst the Polish divines, their proneness to metaphysical subtleties, and their indifference to practical and scriptural religion, may serve at once to illustrate the style of the volume, and to explain the rapid spread of Unitarianism in Poland.

“As to the study of divinity in Poland, those of that profession make all their learning consist in adapting Aristotle’s logic and metaphysics to their school divinity ; so that you may everywhere hear them talk much of entities, modes, quiddities, essences of things, and the like, for they value themselves more in the signification of logical terms than in the nature of things themselves which they reason about. Albertus Magnus is in great esteem here, and is perpetually quoted to attest the truth of any assertion with as much vehemence as Aristotle by the Italians and Spaniards ; though, as it has been said before, the natives of this kingdom have not less respect for this last philosopher than other nations have. Yet, notwithstanding, they seldom take his meaning right, more especially in matters that are ambiguous, for they have published several large commentaries upon him, which, besides contradicting each other, like our Dutch annotators, stand in need of explanations themselves. The Polish divines likewise are seldom well versed in practical divinity. They look very little into the Old and New Testament : and make few enquiries into the practice of primitive Christianity, having but a small insight into Church history. In a word, they trouble their heads but seldom about convincing their reason of the sublimity and goodness of the Christian doctrine : implicit faith and passive obedience to Council and Church decisions being entirely their guides. So that they will allow of nobody’s search into the reasonableness of things, as if they should imagine that a law or a doctrine given by God should not be consistent with reason. They have also a more than ordinary respect for Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus, their

principal erudition consisting in being well read in the school points controverted by those two great men, how ill soever they are understood."

Some passages in South's sermons, and some sayings recorded of him, now and subsequently, have been understood to indicate that he felt disappointment and irritation at not receiving further promotion in the Church. One passage especially in his discourse *On the Wisdom of this World*, has been referred to, as seeming to imply that his claims on the government had been neglected. He is satirizing of the ingratitude of statesmen and politicians :

" But if a poor, old, decayed friend or relation, whose purse, whose house and heart had been formerly free, and open to such an one, shall at length upon change of fortune come to him with hunger and rags, pleading his past services and his present wants, and so crave some relief of one for the merit and memory of the other, the politician, who imitates the serpent's wisdom, must turn his deaf ear too to all the insignificant charms of gratitude and honour in behalf of such a bankrupt, undone friend, who having been already used, and now squeezed dry, is fit only to be cast aside. He must abhor gratitude as a worse kind of witchcraft, which only serves to conjure up the pale, meagre ghosts of dead, forgotten kindnesses to haunt and trouble him, still respecting what is past ; whereas such wise men as himself, in such cases, account all that is past to be also gone, and know that there can be no gain in refunding, nor any profit in paying debts. The sole measure of all his courtesies is, what return they will make him, and what revenue they will bring him in. His expectations govern his charity. And we must not vouch any man for an exact master in the rules of our modern policy, but such an one as hath brought himself so far to hate and despise the absurdity of being kind upon free cost, as, to use a known expression, not so much as to tell a friend what it is a-clock for nothing."

It seems clear, however, that South neither deemed himself slighted by the government nor had he grounds for any such feeling. On several occasions a bishopric was offered to and declined by him. He said that his income was abundantly sufficient for his wants, and that his duties were already onerous enough to tax his powers to the utmost. If there is any personal reference at all in these passages, it must be to the case of friends who, having made great and painful sacrifices for the royal cause under the Commonwealth, were now passed over and forgotten by the restored monarch.

On the accession of James, South, like many other loyal subjects and good Protestants, was placed in a position of extreme difficulty. On the one hand rebellion seemed to him to be a deadly sin. He had steadfastly maintained the doctrines of divine right and of passive obedience. He had taught, both by practice and precept, that Christians may suffer from, but must not resist, the powers that be. He could not therefore join in any of the movements for compelling the abdication of the misguided king. Indeed he went so far, at the time of the Monmouth rebellion, as to declare that in case of need he would change his black coat for a buff one in defence of the government. When the Archbishop of Canterbury and other bishops who had already signed the invitation to the Prince of Orange to come over, applied to South for his signature, he replied: "His religion

had taught him to bear all things, and howsoever it should please God that he should suffer, he would, by the Divine assistance, continue to abide by his allegiance, and use no other weapons but his prayers and tears for the recovery of his sovereign from the wicked and unadvised counsels wherewith he was entangled."

Whilst thus a staunch upholder of the royal prerogative, he was a no less strenuous opponent of the Romish doctrines and practices which the misguided monarch was endeavouring to force upon the nation. His great friend and patron, Lord Rochester, having vainly warned the king against the fatal consequences of the course he was pursuing and steadfastly refused to join him in his policy, proposed to James that a disputation should be held between two divines of the Church of England and two of the Church of Rome on the doctrinal points at issue. The king consented, and nominated Fathers Giffard and Tilden. The earl named Drs. Jane and South. But South was so unacceptable to the king from his uncompromising and outspoken character, that Dr. Patrick was substituted for him. It was arranged, however, that South should meet the Protestant champions in conference the night before, in order to decide upon the line of argument they should adopt. The result of the debate was that the Romanists were signally worsted; the king dismissing his chosen advocates by declaring that "he could say more in behalf of his

religion than they could, and that he never knew a bad cause managed so well or a good one so ill." Dr. Jane and Dr. Patrick, though eminent and able men, were always forward to confess their obligations to South in the matter, and to declare that, next to the goodness of their cause, the victory was due to the arguments and illustrations with which he supplied them.

The abdication of James and the accession of William and Mary increased the difficulties and perplexities of South's position. Most of those who shared his doctrines of divine right and passive obedience hesitated to transfer their allegiance to the new government, and refused to take the oaths. With these scruples South to a great extent sympathized, and he was strongly disposed to act with the non-jurors. At length, after many struggles with himself and many debates with others, he came to the conclusion that "obedience and protection were reciprocal terms, that where the latter was void the former became void also," and that the abdication and flight of James virtually released his subjects from his claim upon them. He therefore acknowledged the legality of the new settlement, and took the oath required of him. Sancroft, Ken, Turner, Lake, White, Lloyd, and Frampton, however, still refused the oath, and were, in consequence, removed from their sees. One of the vacant bishoprics was now again pressed upon South's acceptance, but he refused it,

declaring "that notwithstanding he himself saw nothing that was contrary to the laws of God and the common practice of all nations to submit to princes in possession of the throne, yet others might have their reasons for a contrary opinion ; and he blessed God that he was neither so ambitious nor in want of preferment, as, for the sake of it, to build his rise upon the ruins of any one father of the Church, who for piety, good morals, and strictness of life, which every one of the deprived bishops were famed for, might be said not to have left their equal."

In the year 1693 South became involved in a protracted and painful controversy with Sherlock, the Dean of St. Paul's, on the doctrine of the Trinity. The Dean had published a work against the Unitarians, entitled, *A Vindication of the Holy and Ever Blessed Trinity*. Endeavouring to explain and prove by reason a doctrine which is above reason, he fell into Tritheism ; so, at least, it was thought. "While he made it his endeavour to prove three distinct persons, he was very justly charged with proving three distinct Gods ; having asserted that there were in the Godhead three Minds, three Beings, and three Intelligences." The Unitarians were not slow to detect and seize upon the error. Choosing to regard Sherlock as the champion and expounder of orthodoxy, they triumphed over the creed of Christendom as though it taught Polytheism. South replied to Sherlock, and rescued Trinitarian doctrine from his perversion

of it. The controversy was carried on with great skill and power on both sides ; but it became greatly embittered by the personalities and acrimony which each of the disputants imported into it. South was generally admitted to have had the best of the discussion, but it would be difficult to decide which displayed the worst taste and temper. Not only did the bishops, the Universities, and the clergy at large join in the fray, but lampoons were sung about the streets ridiculing the disputants. The controversy was only terminated by the royal authority. The king, in order to repress the scandal, interposed his mandate, enjoining the archbishops and bishops to take order that no preacher whatsoever should presume to deliver any other doctrine concerning the blessed Trinity than what was contained in the words of Holy Scripture, the three creeds, and the Thirty-nine Articles.

During the latter years of South's life his health was much broken. He suffered from various painful and distressing disorders which might have excused a degree of irritability or gloom ; but we are told that he retained his sprightliness and vivacity, his devotion to study, and his keen interest in public affairs to the last. He felt with advancing years a sense of solitude creep over him, and as friend after friend was taken from his side by death, he said that "it was time for him to prepare for his journey to a blessed immortality ; since all that was good and gracious, and the very breath of his nostrils had made its departure to

the regions of bliss and eternal happiness." The end was drawing near. He closed his long and active life on Sunday, July 8, 1716, at the age of eighty-three.

South's faults and his excellences lie upon the surface. His sincerity and his earnestness, his uncompromising honesty, his shrewd, clear insight, his sound judgment, his robust, vigorous, common-sense appear on every page of his writings. But, at the same time, there are few of his discourses in which he does not display intolerance, inveterate prejudices, and vehement partisanship, and in which the reader is not pained by the bitter scorn and fierce sarcasm which he pours out upon his opponents. He hated the Puritans with a blind and undiscerning hatred. He made no allowance for them, expressed no sympathy with their evangelical creed and devoted labours, attempted no discrimination between the good and the bad men of the party, but assailed them all with unrelenting hostility. It is impossible to justify the violations of courtesy and charity which deface his works: but it may be urged in palliation that his faults were those of his age; that the lofty intellect of Milton, the devout fervour of Baxter, and the massive scholarship of Owen were not free from the same defects. It was a time of conflict in which every combatant, with tongue or pen, smote his foes with all his might, and no quarter was given or expected.

As a theologian we cannot assign South a place in the very foremost rank of our great English thinkers. He was essentially a preacher. It was his province, not so much to discover truth, as to expound and enforce it. The impetuosity and vehemence which made him so powerful as an orator, unfitted him for the patient, steady processes of thought which scientific theology demands. He was by nature better fitted to deal with questions of ethics and practical Christianity, than with the spiritual and profound doctrines of revealed religion. "He knew mankind well," says a recent editor of his collected works. "There is no pleasant vice, no self-gratulating hypocrisy, no evasion of duty under a complacent admission of its claims, that can escape his searching glance. He strips vice and folly of their frippery, scatters the delusions of pride and passion, and lays down the rules of Christian faith and practice with a precision which satisfies the intellect whilst it leaves the transgressor without an excuse. It is this masculine spirit which gives to the pages of South an interest which never flags, and we never turn from them without feeling that some weakness has been overthrown, some principle placed in a clearer light, and a healthy tone communicated to the mind. His place among divines may not be among the highest, but it is not far beneath them; as a clear and original thinker, and as a master of a manly and forcible style he is surpassed by none."

South was evangelical in the main outlines of his doctrinal system. The impossibility of justification by the works of the law, is nowhere shown more clearly and forcibly than in his discourse on *The Doctrine of Merit stated*. The substitutionary and atoning work of Christ is asserted with a precision and fulness worthy of all praise in *The Sufferings of Christ for the Sins of his People*. One of the most eloquent and powerful sermons in the language, is that in which, with the tenderest pathos, he sets forth the love of Christ for his disciples. The evangelical character of South's doctrinal system is the more remarkable from the fact that he waged a life-long battle with the Puritans, and seldom named them without the addition of some opprobrious epithet. His differences with them were, however, rather political and disciplinary than doctrinal. Perhaps he himself would have been astonished to discover the extent to which he was in agreement with his ecclesiastical opponents.

Whilst South was thus essentially orthodox and evangelical, it must be admitted that his views of truth were in many respects defective. The atonement of Christ, the work of the Spirit, the salvation of the sinner by grace alone through faith, were all maintained by him, but not with the fulness and frequency we must desire. They formed parts of his theological system, but they are co-ordinate where they should be supreme. They held their place

amongst other doctrines, but they did not pervade, irradiate, and vitalize the whole. The reader of the following pages, amidst all his admiration of the genius of the writer, will often miss the fervour, the unction, and the fulness of evangelical teaching, with which the same subject would have been treated by many of South's contemporaries.

Many of our most eminent critics have commended South's style as a model of pulpit eloquence. Its force and fire, its richness and variety, its alternation of antithesis and epigram with copious exposition and stately eloquence, give it an unflagging interest. "His sermons," says a writer in the *Retrospective Review*, "ought to be carefully studied, and we may venture to add that the labour will not be unprofitable; they bear the unequivocal stamp which a peculiar turn of mind and great genius cannot fail to impress. The copious and energetic language of South might serve to invigorate the well-turned and rounded periods of many a modern scribbler, which fall softly on the ear, but have not power to penetrate farther."

Professor Rogers, in his well-known essay on "Pulpit Eloquence," in the *Edinburgh Review*, says: "Of all the English preachers, South seems to us to furnish, in point of *style*, the truest specimens of the most effective species of pulpit eloquence. We are speaking, it must be remembered, simply of his style: we offer no opinion on the degree of truth or error in the system of doctrines he embraced; and for his un-

christian bitterness, and often unseemly wit, would be the last to offer any apology. But his robust intellect, his shrewd common-sense, his vehement feelings, and a fancy always more distinguished by force than by elegance, admirably qualified him for a powerful public speaker. His style is accordingly marked by all the characteristics which might naturally be expected from the possession of such qualities. It is everywhere direct, condensed, pungent. His sermons are well worthy of frequent and diligent perusal by every young preacher." Hallam, in his *Literature of Europe*, eulogises him in terms scarcely less emphatic. Dr. Johnson declared that his discourses had in them "whatever wit and wisdom could put together," and that "the best way to praise him is to quote him."

The sermons selected for insertion in this volume are such as seemed to possess most permanent interest and value. The bitter controversies, the noisy polemics of the day, in which South took so large a part, have been hushed to silence with the passions which gave them birth. The great verities of the Gospel which he expounded and enforced with so much energy and eloquence, possess an abiding value. They are not for one generation only, but for all time. "The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Passing by his intolerance and partisanship, we gladly meet him, in these pages, on the common ground of "the common salvation."

MAN CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE.

A SERMON PREACHED AT THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH
OF ST. PAUL.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him.—Genesis i. 27.

HOW hard it is for natural reason to discover a creation before revealed, or, being revealed, to believe it, the strange opinions of the old philosophers, and the infidelity of modern atheists, is too sad a demonstration. To run the world back to its first original and infancy, and, as it were, to view nature in its cradle, to trace the outgoings of the Ancient of Days in the first instance and specimen of his creative power, is a research too great for any mortal inquiry; and we might continue our scrutiny to the end of the world before natural reason would be able to find out when it begun.

Epicurus, in his discourse concerning the original of the world, is so fabulous and ridiculously merry, that we may well judge the design of his philosophy to have been pleasure, and not instruction.

Aristotle held that it streamed by connatural result and emanation from God, the infinite and eternal mind, as the light issues from the sun; so that there was no instant of duration assignable of God's eternal existence, in which the world did not also co-exist. Others held a fortuitous concourse of atoms.

But all seem jointly to explode a creation; still beating upon this ground, that to produce something out of nothing is impossible and incomprehensible. Incomprehensible indeed I grant, but not therefore impossible. There is not the least transaction of sense and motion in the whole man but philosophers are at a loss to comprehend, I am sure they are to explain, it. Wherefore it is not always rational to measure the truth of an assertion by the standard of our apprehension.

But to bring things even to the bare perceptions of reason, I appeal to any one, who shall impartially reflect upon the ideas and conceptions of his own mind, whether he doth not find it as easy and suitable to his natural notions to conceive that an Infinite Almighty Power might produce a thing out of nothing, and make that to exist *de novo*, which did not exist before, as to conceive the world to have had no beginning, but to have existed from eternity, which, were it so proper for this place and exercise, I could easily demonstrate to be attended with no small train of absurdities. But then, besides that the acknow-

ledging of a creation is safe, and the denial of it dangerous and irreligious, and yet not more (perhaps much less) demonstrable than the affirmative, so over and above it gives me this advantage, that, let it seem never so strange, uncouth, and impossible, the nonplus of my reason will yield a fairer opportunity to my faith.

In this chapter we have God surveying the works of the creation, and leaving this general impress or character upon them, that they were exceeding good. What an Omnipotence wrought, we have an Omniscience to approve. But as it is reasonable to imagine that there is more of design, and consequently more of perfection in the last work, we have God here giving his last stroke, and summing up all into man, the whole into a part, the universe into an individual ; so that whereas in other creatures we have but the trace of his footsteps, in man we have the draught of his hand. In him were united all the scattered perfections of the creature ; all the graces and ornaments, all the airs and features of being were abridged into this small yet full system of nature and divinity ; as we might well imagine that the great Artificer would be more than ordinarily exact in drawing his own picture.

The work that I shall undertake from these words shall be to show what this image of God in man is, and wherein it doth consist ; which I shall do these two ways—I. Negatively, by showing wherein it does

not consist ; II. Positively, by showing wherein it does.

I. For the first of these we are to remove the erroneous opinion of the Socinians. They deny that the image of God consisted in any habitual perfections that adorned the soul of Adam, but, as to his understanding, bring him in void of all notion, a rude unwritten blank ; making him to be created as much an infant as others are born ; sent into the world only to read and spell out a God in the works of creation, to learn by degrees, till at length his understanding grew up to the stature of his body. Also without any inherent habits of virtue in his will ; thus divesting him of all, and stripping him to his bare essence. So that all the perfection they allowed his understanding was aptness and docility, and all that they attributed to his will was a possibility to be virtuous.

But, wherein then, according to their opinion, did this image of God consist ? Why, in that power and dominion that God gave Adam over the creatures, in that he was vouched his immediate deputy upon earth, the viceroy of the creation, and lord-lieutenant of the world. But that this power and dominion is not adequately and formally the image of God, but only a part of it, is clear from hence ; because, then, he that had most of this would have most of God's image ; and, consequently, Nimrod had more of it than Noah, Saul than Samuel, the persecutors than

the martyrs, and Cæsar than Christ himself, which, to assert, is a blasphemous paradox. And if the image of God is only grandeur, power, and sovereignty, certainly we have been hitherto much mistaken in our duty, and hereafter are by all means to beware of making ourselves unlike God by too much self-denial and humility. I am not ignorant that some may distinguish between *exousia* and *dynamis*, between a lawful authority and an actual power, and affirm that God's image consists only in the former, which wicked princes, such as Saul and Nimrod, have not, though they possess the latter. But to this I answer,

1. That the Scripture neither makes nor owns such a distinction, nor anywhere asserts that when princes begin to be wicked they cease of right to be governors. Add to this, that when God renewed this charter of man's sovereignty over the creatures to Noah and his family, we find no exception at all, but that Cham stood as fully invested with this right as any of his brethren.

2. But, secondly, this savours of something ranker than Socinianism, even the tenets of the fifth monarchy, and of sovereignty founded only upon saintship; and, therefore, fitter to be answered by the judge than by the divine, and to receive its confutation at the bar of justice than from the pulpit.

II. Having now made our way through this false opinion, we are, in the next place, to lay down posi-

tively what this image of God in man is. It is, in short, that universal rectitude of all the faculties of the soul by which they stand apt and disposed to their respective offices and operations, which will be more fully set forth by taking a distinct survey of it in the several faculties belonging to the soul.

1. In the understanding.
2. In the will.
3. In the passions or affections.

1. And first for its noblest faculty, the understanding. It was then sublime, clear, and aspiring, and, as it were, the soul's upper region lofty and serene, free from the vapours and disturbances of the inferior affections. It was the leading, controlling faculty; all the passions wore the colours of reason; it did not so much persuade as command; it was not consul but dictator. Discourse was then almost as quick as intuition; it was nimble in proposing, firm in concluding; it could sooner determine than now it can dispute. Like the sun, it had both light and agility; it knew no rest but in motion, no quiet but in activity. It did not so properly apprehend as irradiate the object; not so much find as make things intelligible. It did arbitrate upon the several reports of sense and all the varieties of imagination; not like a drowsy judge only hearing, but also directing their verdict. In sum, it was vegete, quick, and lively; open as the day, untainted as the morning, full of the innocence and spriteliness of youth; it gave the soul a bright

and a full view into all things, and was not only a window but itself the prospect. Briefly, there is as much difference between the clear representations of the understanding then, and the obscure discoveries that it makes now, as there is between the prospect of a casement and of a keyhole.

Now, as there are two great functions of the soul, contemplation and practice, according to that general division of objects, some of which only entertain our speculation, others also employ our actions ; so the understanding with relation to these (not because of any distinction in the faculty itself) is accordingly divided into speculative and practical, in both of which the image of God was then apparent.

i. For the understanding speculative. There are some general maxims and notions in the mind of man which are the rules of discourse and the basis of all philosophy, as that the same thing cannot at the same time be and not be ; that the whole is bigger than a part ; that two proportions, severally equal to a third, must also be equal to one another. Aristotle, indeed, affirms the mind to be at first a mere *rasa tabula*, and that these notions are not ingenite and imprinted by the finger of nature, but by the latter and more languid impressions of sense, being only the reports of observation, and the result of so many repeated experiments.

But to this I answer :

That these notions are universal, and what is uni-

versal must needs proceed from some universal, constant principle, the same in all particulars, which here can be nothing else but human nature.

Further : these cannot be infused by observation, because they are the rules by which men take their first apprehensions and observations of things, and therefore in order of nature must needs precede them, as the being of the rule must be before its application to the thing directed by it. From whence it follows, that these were notions not descending from us, but born with us ; not our offspring, but our brethren ; and, as I may so say, such as we were taught without the help of a teacher.

Now it was Adam's happiness in the state of innocence to have these notions clear and unsullied. He came into the world a philosopher, which sufficiently appeared by his writing the nature of things upon their names ; he could view essences in themselves, and read forms without the comment of their respective properties ; he could see consequents yet dormant in their principles, and effects yet unborn and in the womb of their causes ; his understanding could almost pierce into future contingents ; his conjectures improving even to prophecy, or the certainties of prediction ; till his fall it was ignorant of nothing but of sin, or at least it rested in the notion without the smart of the experiment. Could any difficulty have been proposed, the resolution would have been as early as the proposal ; it could not have had time to

settle into doubt. Like a better Archimedes, the issue of all his enquiries was *eureka, eureka*, the offspring of his brain without the sweat of his brow. Study was not then a duty, night-watchings were needless; the light of reason wanted not the assistance of a candle. This is the doom of fallen man to labour in the fire, to seek truth *in profundo*, to exhaust his time and impair his health, and perhaps to spin out his days and himself into one pitiful controverted conclusion. There was then no poring, no struggling with memory, no straining for invention. His faculties were quick and expedite; they answered without knocking, they were ready upon the first summons, there was freedom and firmness in all their operations.

I confess it is difficult for us, who date our ignorance from our first being, and were still bred up with the same infirmities about us with which we were born, to raise our thoughts and imagination to those intellectual perfections that attended our nature in the time of innocence, as it is for a peasant bred up in the obscurities of a cottage to fancy in his mind the unseen splendours of a court. But by rating positives by their privatives, and other arts of reason, by which discourse supplies the want of the reports of sense, we may collect the excellency of the understanding then by the glorious remainders of it now, and guess at the stateliness of the building by the magnificence of its ruins. All those arts, rarities, and inventions, which vulgar minds gaze at, the ingenious pursue, and all

admire, are but the relics of an intellect defaced with sin and time. We admire it now only as antiquaries do a piece of old coin, for the stamp it once bore, and not for those vanishing lineaments and disappearing draughts that remain upon it at present. And certainly that must needs have been very glorious the decays of which are so admirable. He that is comely when old and decrepit, surely was very beautiful when he was young. An Aristotle was but the rubbish of an Adam, and Athens but the rudiments of Paradise.

ii. The image of God was no less resplendent in that which we call man's practical understanding, namely, that storehouse of the soul, in which are treasured up the rules of action and the seeds of morality, where, we must observe, that many who deny all connate notions in the speculative intellect do yet admit them in this. Now of this sort are these maxims, that God is to be worshipped, that parents are to be honoured, that a man's word is to be kept, and the like ; which, being of universal influence as to the regulation of the behaviour and converse of mankind, are the ground of all virtue, and civility, and the foundation of religion.

It was the privilege of Adam innocent to have these notions also firm and untainted, to carry his monitor in his bosom, his law in his heart, and to have such a conscience as might be its own casuist : and certainly those actions must needs be regular where there is an identity between the rule and the faculty.

His own mind taught him a due dependence upon God, and chalked out to him the just proportions and measures of behaviour to his fellow-creatures. He had no catechism but the creation, needed no study but reflection, read no book but the volume of the world, and that too not for rules to work by, but for objects to work upon. Reason was his tutor, and first principles his *magna moralia*. The Decalogue of Moses was but a transcript, not an original. All the laws of nations and wise decrees of state, the statutes of Solon, and the twelve tables, were but a paraphrase upon this standing rectitude of nature, this fruitful principle of justice, that was ready to run out and enlarge itself into suitable determinations upon all emergent objects and occasions. Justice then was neither blind to discern nor lame to execute. It was not subject to be imposed upon by a deluded fancy, nor yet to be bribed by a glozing appetite, for an *utile* or *jucundum** to turn the balance to a false or dishonest sentence. In all its directions of the inferior faculties it conveyed its suggestions with clearness, and enjoined them with power; it had the passions in perfect subjection; and though its command over them was but suasive and political, yet it had the force of coaction, and despotical. It was not then as it is now, where the conscience has only power to disapprove, and to protest against the exorbitances of the passions, and rather to wish than make them other-

* Profitable or pleasant.

wise. The voice of conscience now is low and weak, chastising the passions, as old Eli did his lustful, domineering sons—"Not so, my sons, not so:" but the voice of conscience then was not this should, or this ought to be done, but this *must*, this *shall* be done. It spoke like a legislator; the thing spoke was a law, and the manner of speaking it a new obligation. In short, there was as great a disparity between the practical dictates of the understanding then and now as there is between empire and advice, counsel and command, between a companion and a governor.

And thus much for the image of God as it shone in man's understanding.

2. Let us in the next place take a view of it as it was stamped upon the will. It is much disputed by divines concerning the power of man's will to good and evil in the state of innocence; and upon very nice and dangerous precipices stand their determinations on either side. Some hold that God invested him with a power to stand, so that in the strength of that power received he might without the auxiliaries of any further influence have determined his will to a full choice of good. Others hold that, notwithstanding this power, yet it was impossible for him to exert it in any good action without a superadded assistance of grace actually determining that power to the certain production of such an act. So that whereas some distinguish between sufficient and effectual

grace, they order the matter so as to acknowledge none sufficient but what is indeed effectual and actually productive of a good action. I shall not presume to interpose dogmatically in a controversy which I look never to see decided. But, concerning the latter of these opinions, I shall only give these two remarks.

i. That it seems contrary to the common and natural conceptions of all mankind, who acknowledge themselves able and sufficient to do many things which actually they never do.

ii. That to assert that God looked upon Adam's fall as a sin, and punished it as such, when, without any antecedent sin of his, he withdrew that actual grace from him, upon the withdrawing of which it was impossible for him not to fall, seems a thing that highly reproaches the essential equity and goodness of the Divine nature.

Wherefore doubtless the will of man in the state of innocence had an entire freedom, a perfect equipendency and indifference to either part of the contradiction, to stand or not to stand, to accept or not accept the temptation. I will grant the will of man now to be as much a slave as any one will have it, and be only free to sin ; that is, instead of a liberty, to have only a licentiousness ; yet certainly this is not nature, but chance. We were not born crooked, we learnt these windings and turnings of the serpent : and therefore it cannot but be a blasphemous piece of

ingratitude to ascribe them to God, and to make the plague of our nature the condition of our creation.

The will was then ductile and pliant to all the motions of right reason, it met the dictates of a clarified understanding half way. And the active information of the intellect, filling the passive reception of the will, like form closing with matter, grew actuate into a third and distinct perfection of practice : the understanding and will never disagreed, for the proposals of the one never thwarted the inclinations of the other. Yet neither did the will servilely attend upon the understanding, but as a favourite does upon his prince, where the service is privilege and preferment ; or as Solomon's servants waited upon him, it admired its wisdom and heard its prudent dictates and counsels, both the direction and the reward of its obedience. It is indeed the nature of this faculty to follow a superior guide, to be drawn by the intellect ; but then it was drawn as a triumphant chariot, which at the same time both follows and triumphs ; while it obeyed this, it commanded the other faculties. It was subordinate, not enslaved to the understanding : not as a servant to a master, but as a queen to her king, who both acknowledges a subjection, and yet retains a majesty.

Pass we now downward from man's intellect and will,

3. To the passions, which have their residence and situation chiefly in the sensitive appetite. For

we must know that, inasmuch as man is a compound and mixture of flesh as well as spirit, the soul during its abode in the body does all things by the mediation of these passions and inferior affections. And here the opinion of the Stoics was famous and singular, who looked upon all these as sinful defects and irregularities, as so many deviations from right reason, making passion to be only another word for perturbation. Sorrow in their esteem was a sin scarce to be expiated by another, to pity was a fault, to rejoice an extravagance, and the apostle's advice, to be angry and sin not, was a contradiction in their philosophy. But in this they were constantly outvoted by other sects of philosophers, neither for fame nor number less than themselves; so that all arguments brought against them from divinity would come in by way of overplus to their confutation. To us let this be sufficient, that our Saviour Christ, who took upon him all our natural infirmities, but none of our sinful, has been seen to weep, to be sorrowful, to pity, and to be angry, which shows that there might be gall in a dove, passion without sin, fire without smoke, and motion without disturbance. For it is not bare agitation, but the sediment at the bottom, that troubles and defiles the water. And when we see it windy and dusty, the wind does not (as we used to say) make, but only raise a dust.

Now, though the schools reduce all the passions to these two heads, the concupiscible and the irascible

appetite, yet I shall not tie myself to an exact prosecution of them under this division, but at this time, leaving both their terms and their method to themselves, consider only the principal and most noted passions from whence we may take an estimate of the rest.

i. And first, for the grand leading affection of all, which is love. This is the great instrument and engine of nature, the bond and cement of society, the spring and spirit of the universe. Love is such an affection as cannot so properly be said to be in the soul, as the soul to be in that. It is the whole man wrapped up into one desire ; all the powers, vigour, and faculties of the soul abridged into one inclination. And it is of that active, restless nature, that it must of necessity exert itself ; and, like the fire, to which it is so often compared, it is not a free agent to choose whether it will heat or no, but it streams forth by natural results and unavoidable emanations, so that it will fasten upon an inferior, unsuitable object, rather than none at all. The soul may sooner leave off to subsist than to love ; and, like the vine, it withers and dies if it has nothing to embrace. Now this affection in the state of innocence was happily pitched upon its right object ; it flamed up in direct fervours of devotion to God, and in collateral emissions of charity to its neighbour. It was not then only another and more cleanly name for lust. It had none of those impure heats that both represent and deserve

hell. It was a vestal and a virgin fire, and differed as much from that which usually passes by this name now-a-days as the vital heat from the burning of a fever.

ii. Then for the contrary passion of *hatred*. This we know is the passion of defiance, and there is a kind of aversation and hostility included in its very essence and being. But then (if there could have been hatred in the world when there was scarce anything odious) it would have acted within the compass of its proper object. Like aloes, bitter indeed, but wholesome. There would have been no rancour, no hatred of our brother: an innocent nature could hate nothing that was innocent. In a word, so great is the commutation, that the soul then hated only that which now only it loves, that is, sin.

And if we may bring *anger* under this head (as being, according to some, a transient hatred), this also, unruly as now it is, yet then vented itself by the measures of reason. There was no such thing as the transports of malice or the violences of revenge; no rendering evil for evil, when evil was truly a nonentity, and nowhere to be found. Anger then was like the sword of justice, keen, but innocent and righteous. It did not act like fury, and then call itself zeal. It always espoused God's honour, and never kindled upon anything but in order to a sacrifice. It sparkled like the coal upon the altar, with the fervours of piety, the heats of

devotion, the sallies and vibrations of an harmless activity.

iii. In the next place, for the lightsome passion of *joy*. It was not that which now often usurps this name; that trivial, vanishing, superficial thing, that only gilds the apprehension, and plays upon the surface of the soul. It was not the mere crackling of thorns, a sudden blaze of the spirits, the exultation of a tickled fancy, or a pleased appetite. Joy was then a masculine and severe thing: the recreation of the judgment, the jubilee of reason. It was the result of a real good, suitably applied. It commenced upon the solidities of truth and the substance of fruition. It did not run out in voice or indecent eruptions, but filled the soul, as God does the universe, silently and without noise. It was refreshing, but composed; like the pleasantness of youth tempered with the gravity of age, or the mirth of a festival managed with the silence of contemplation.

iv. And, on the other side, for *sorrow*. Had any loss or disaster made but room for grief, it would have moved according to the severe allowances of prudence and the proportions of the provocation. It would not have sallied out into complaint or loudness, nor spread itself upon the face, and writ sad stories upon the forehead; no wringing of the hands, knocking the breast, or wishing one's self unborn; all which are but the ceremonies of sorrow, the pomp and ostentation of an effeminate grief, which speak not so much

the greatness of the misery as the smallness of the mind. Tears may spoil the eyes, but not wash away the affliction; sighs may exhaust the man, but not eject the burthen. Sorrow then would have been as silent as thought, as severe as philosophy; it would have rested in inward senses, tacit dislikes, and the whole scene of it been transacted in sad and silent reflections.

v. Then, again, for *hope*. Though indeed the fulness and affluence of man's enjoyments in the state of innocence might seem to leave no place for hope, in respect of any further addition to, but only of the future continuance of, what already he possessed, yet, doubtless, God, who made no faculty but also provided it with a proper object upon which it might exercise and lay out itself, even in its greatest innocence, did then exercise man's hopes with the expectations of a better Paradise or a more intimate admission to himself. For it is not imaginable that Adam could fix upon such poor, thin enjoyments as riches, pleasure, and the gaities of an animal life. Hope, indeed, was always the anchor of the soul, yet certainly it was not to catch or fasten upon such mud. And if, as the apostle says, no man hopes for that which he sees, much less could Adam then hope for such things as he saw through.

vi. And lastly, for the affection of *fear*. It was then the instrument of caution, not of anxiety; a guard, and not a torment, to the breast that had it. It is now

indeed an unhappiness, the disease of the soul ; it flies from a shadow, and makes more dangers than it avoids ; it weakens the judgment, and betrays the succours of reason. So hard is it to tremble and not to err, and to hit the mark with a shaking hand. Then it fixed upon Him who is only to be feared, God ; and yet with a filial fear, which at the same time both fears and loves. It was awe without amazement, dread without distraction. There was then a beauty even in this very paleness ; it was the colour of devotion giving a lustre to reverence and a gloss to humility.

Thus did the passions then act without any of their present jars, combats, or repugnances ; all moving with the beauty of uniformity and the stillness of composure, like a well-governed army, not for fighting, but for rank and order. I confess the Scripture does not expressly attribute these several endowments to Adam in his first estate. But all that I have said, and much more, may be drawn out of that short aphorism, "God made man upright."* And since the opposite weaknesses now infest the nature of man fallen, if we will be true to the rule of contraries, we must conclude that those perfections were the lot of man innocent.

Now from this so exact and regular composure of the faculties, all moving in their due place, each striking in its proper time, there arose, by natural

* Eccles. vii. 29.

consequence, the crowning perfection of all, a good conscience. For, as in the body, when the principal parts, as the heart and liver, do their offices, and all the inferior, smaller vessels act orderly and duly, there arises a sweet enjoyment upon the whole, which we call health, so in the soul, when the supreme faculties of the will and understanding move regularly, the inferior passions and affections following, there arises a serenity and complacency upon the soul infinitely beyond the greatest bodily pleasures, the highest quintessence and elixir of worldly delights. There is in this case a kind of fragrantcy and spiritual perfume upon the conscience, much like what Isaac spoke of his son's garments, that the scent of them was like the smell of a field which the Lord had blessed. Such a freshness and flavour is there upon the soul when daily watered with the actions of a virtuous life. Whatsoever is pure, is also pleasant.

Having thus surveyed the image of God in the soul of man, we are not to omit now those characters of majesty that God imprinted upon the body. He drew some traces of his image upon this also, as much as a spiritual substance could be pictured upon a corporeal. As for the sect of the Anthropomorphites, who from hence ascribe to God the figure of a man—eyes, hands, feet, and the like—they are too ridiculous to deserve a confutation. They would seem to draw this impiety from the letter of the Scripture some-

times speaking of God in this manner. Absurdly ! as if the mercy of Scripture expressions ought to warrant the blasphemy of our opinions, and not rather show us that God condescends to us only to draw us to himself, and clothes himself in our likeness only to win us to his own. The practice of the Papists is much of the same nature, in their absurd and impious picturing of God Almighty : but the wonder in them is the less, since the image of a deity may be a proper object for that which is but the image of a religion.

But to proceed : Adam was then no less glorious in his externals ; he had a beautiful body, as well as an immortal soul. The whole compound was like a well-built temple, stately without and sacred within. The elements were at perfect union and agreement in his body ; and their contrary qualities served not for the dissolution of the compound, but the variety of the composure. Galen, who had no more divinity than what his physic taught him, barely upon the consideration of this so exact frame of the body, challenges any one, upon an hundred years' study, to find how any the least fibre or most minute particle might be more commodiously placed, either for the advantage of use or comeliness. His stature erect, and tending upwards to his centre ; his countenance majestic and comely, with the lustre of a native beauty that scorned the poor assistance of art or the attempts of imitation ; his body of so much quickness and agility, that it did not only contain, but also

represent the soul: for we might well suppose that where God did deposit so rich a jewel he would suitably adorn the case. It was a fit workhouse for spritely, vivid faculties to exercise and exert themselves in; a fit tabernacle for an immortal soul not only to dwell in, but to contemplate upon; where it might see the world without travel, it being a lesser scheme of the creation nature contracted, a little cosmography or map of the universe. Neither was the body then subject to distempers, to die by piecemeal, and languish under coughs, catarrhs, or consumptions. Adam knew no disease so long as temperance from the forbidden fruit secured him. Nature was his physician; and innocence and abstinence would have kept him healthful to immortality.

Now the use of this point might be various, but at present it shall be only this, to remind us of the irreparable loss that we sustained in our first parents, to show us of how fair a portion Adam disinherited his whole posterity by one single prevarication. Take the picture of a man in the greenness and vivacity of his youth, and in the latter date and declension of his drooping years, and you will scarce know it to belong to the same person; there would be more art to discern than at first to draw it. The same and greater is the difference between man innocent and fallen. He is, as it were, a new kind or species; the plague of sin has even altered his nature, and eaten his very essentials. The image of God is wiped out; the

creatures have shook off his yoke, renounced his sovereignty, and revolted from his dominion; distempers and diseases have shattered the excellent frame of his body; and by a new dispensation, immortality is swallowed up of mortality. The same disaster and decay also has invaded his spirituals: the passions rebel, every faculty would usurp and rule; and there are so many governors, that there can be no government. The light within us is become darkness; and the understanding, that should be eyes to the blind faculty of the will, is blind itself, and so brings all the inconveniences that attend a blind follower under the conduct of a blind guide. He that would have a clear ocular demonstration of this, let him reflect upon that numerous litter of strange, senseless, absurd opinions that crawl about the world, to the disgrace of reason and the unanswerable reproach of a broken intellect.

The two great perfections that both adorn and exercise man's understanding are philosophy and religion. For the first of these: take it even amongst the professors of it, where it most flourished, and we shall find the very first notions of common sense debauched by them. For there have been such as have asserted that there is no such thing in the world as motion; that contradictions may be true. There has not been wanting one that has denied snow to be white. Such a stupidity or wantonness had seized upon the most raised wits, that it might be doubted

whether the philosophers or the owls of Athens were the quicker sighted. But then for religion: what prodigious, monstrous, misshapen births has the reason of fallen man produced! It is now almost six thousand years that far the greatest part of the world has had no other religion but idolatry. And idolatry certainly is the firstborn of folly, the great and leading paradox, nay, the very abridgment and sum total of all absurdities. For is it not strange that a rational man should worship an ox, nay, the image of an ox? that he should fawn upon his dog? bow himself before a cat? adore leeks and garlick, and shed penitential tears at the smell of a deified onion? Yet so did the Egyptians, once the famed masters of all arts and learning. And to go a little further, we have yet a stranger instance in Isa. xlv. 14. A man hews him down a tree in the wood, and part of it he burns, in the 16th verse; and, in the 17th verse, with the residue thereof he maketh a god. With one part he furnishes his chimney, with the other his chapel. A strange thing that the fire must first consume this part, and then burn incense to that. As if there was more divinity in one end of the stick than in the other; or as if it could be graved and painted omnipotent, or the nails and the hammer could give it an apotheosis. Briefly, so great is the change, so deplorable the degradation of our nature, that whereas before we bore the image of God, we now retain only the image of men.

In the last place, we learn from hence the excellency of the Christian religion, in that it is the great and only means that God has sanctified and designed to repair the breaches of humanity, to set fallen man upon his legs again, to clarify his reason, to rectify his will, and to compose and regulate his affections. The whole business of our redemption is, in short, only to rub over the defaced copy of the creation, to reprint God's image upon the soul, and, as it were, to set forth nature in a second and a fairer edition.

The recovery of which lost image, as it is God's pleasure to command, and our duty to endeavour, so it is in his power only to effect.

THE
DOCTRINE OF MERIT STATED,
AND THE
IMPOSSIBILITY OF MAN'S MERITING
OF GOD,

ASSERTED IN A DISCOURSE PREACHED AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

Can a man be profitable to God?—Job xxii. 2.

IT is a matter of no small moment, certainly, for a man to be rightly informed upon what terms and conditions he is to transact with God, and God with him, in the great business of his salvation. For by knowing upon what terms he must obtain eternal happiness hereafter, he will know also upon what grounds he is to hope for and expect it here. And so be able to govern both his actions and expectations according to the nature of the thing he is in pursuit of, lest, otherwise, he should chance to fail of the prize he runs for by mistaking the way he should run in.

St. Paul, as plainly as words can express a thing, tells us that eternal life is the gift of God, and consequently to be expected by us only as such ; nay, he

asserts it to be a gift in the very same verse in which he affirms death to be as due to a sinner as wages are to a workman,* than which words nothing certainly can be more full and conclusive, that salvation proceeds wholly upon free gift, though damnation upon strict desert.

Nevertheless, such is the extreme folly, or rather sottishness of man's corrupt nature, that this does by no means satisfy him ; for though indeed he would fain be happy, yet fain would he also thank none for it but himself. And though he finds that not only his duty, but his necessity brings him every day upon his knees to Almighty God for the very bread he eats, yet when he comes to deal with him about spirituals (things of infinitely greater value) he appears and acts, not as a suppliant, but as a merchant ; not as one who comes to be relieved, but to traffic for something he would receive of God and something he would give him. And nothing will content this insolent, yet impotent creature, unless he may seem to buy the very thing he begs ; such being the pride and baseness of some spirits that, where they receive a benefit too big for them to requite, they will even deny the kindness and disown the obligation.

Now this great self-delusion, so prevalent upon most minds, is the thing here encountered in the text, the words of which, by an usual way of speech, under an interrogation couching a positive assertion, are a

declaration of the impossibility of man's being profitable to God, or, which is all one, of his meriting of God, according to the true, proper, and strict sense of merit. Nor does this interrogative way of expression import only a bare negation of the thing as in itself impossible, but also a manifest, undeniable evidence of the said impossibility; as if it had been said that nothing can be more plainly impossible than for a man to be profitable to God; for God to receive any advantage by man's righteousness, or to gain anything by his making his ways perfect, and, consequently, that nothing can be more absurd and contrary to all sense and reason, than for a man to entertain and cherish so irrational a conceit or to affirm so gross a paradox.

And that no other thing is here meant by a man's being profitable to God but his meriting of God, will appear from a true state and account of the nature of merit, which we may not improperly define a right to receive some good upon the score of some good done, together with an equivalence or parity of worth between the good to be received and the good done.

Thus much therefore being premised as an explication of the drift or design of the words, the words themselves being too plain and easy to need any further exposition, we shall observe and draw from them these four particulars.

I. Something supposed or implied in them; viz., that men are naturally very prone to entertain an

opinion or persuasion that they are able to merit of God or be profitable to him.

II. Something expressed ; namely, that such an opinion or persuasion is utterly false and absurd, and that it is impossible for man to merit of God or to be profitable to him.

III. Something inferred from both the former, to wit, that the forementioned opinion or persuasion is the very source or foundation of two of the greatest corruptions that have infested the Christian church and religion. And,

IV. Something objected against the particulars discoursed of, which I shall endeavour to answer and remove, and so conclude this discourse.

I. The thing supposed or implied in the words ; namely, that men are naturally very prone to entertain an opinion or persuasion that they are able to merit of God or be profitable to him.

The truth of which will appear from these two considerations.

First, that it is natural for them to place too high a value both upon themselves and their own performances. And that this is so is evident from that universal experience which proves it no less natural to them to bear a more than ordinary love to themselves ; and all love, we know, is founded in and results from a proportionable esteem of the object loved ; so that, look in what degree any man loves

himself, in the same degree it will follow that he must esteem himself too. Upon which account it is that every man will be sure to set his own price upon what he is and what he does, whether the world will come up to it or no, as it seldom does.

That speech of St. Peter to our Saviour is very remarkable : "Master, we have forsook all, and followed thee ; what shall we have therefore ?" * in which words he seems to be upon equal terms with his Lord, and to expect no more of him, as he thought, but strictly a pennyworth for his penny. And all this from a conceit that he had done an act so exceedingly meritorious that it must even nonplus his Master's bounty to quit scores with him by a just requital ; nay, so far had the same proud ferment got into the minds of all the disciples, that neither could their own low condition, nor the constant sermons of that great example of self-denial and humility whom they daily conversed with, nor, lastly, the correctives of a peculiar grace, totally clear and cure them of it. And therefore no wonder if a principle so deeply rooted in nature works with the whole power of nature ; and considering also the corruption of nature, as little wonder is it if it runs out with an extravagance equal to its power, making the minds of men even drunk with a false intoxicating conceit of their own worth and abilities. From whence it is that as man is, of all creatures in the world, both the most

* Matt. xix. 27.

desirous and the most unable to advance himself, so, through pride and indigence (qualities which usually concur in beggars), none is so unwilling to own the benefactions he lives by and has no claim to, as this weak and worthless self-admirer who has nothing to be admired in him but that he can upon such terms admire himself. For "Naked came I into the world, and naked shall I go out again," ought to be the motto of every man when born, the history of his life, and his epitaph when dead. His emptiness and self-consciousness together cannot but make him feel in himself (which is the surest way of knowing) that he has indeed nothing, and yet he bears himself as if he could command all things ; at the same time low in condition, and yet lofty in opinion ; boasting, and yet depending ; nay, boasting against Him whom he depends upon, which certainly is the foulest solecism in behaviour, and two of the worst qualities that can be in conjunction. But,

Secondly, a second consideration from whence we infer this proneness in men to think themselves able to merit of God or to be profitable to him, is their natural aptness to form and measure their apprehensions of the supreme Lord of all things by what they apprehend and observe of the princes and potentates of this world with reference to such as are under their dominion. And this is certainly a very prevailing fallacy, and steals too easily upon men's minds, as being founded in the unhappy predominance of sense

over reason, which, in the present condition of man's nature, does but too frequently and fatally take place. For men naturally have but faint notions of things spiritual, and such as incur not into their senses ; but their eyes, their ears, and their hands are too often made by them the rule of their faith, but almost always the reason of their practice. And, therefore, no marvel if they blunder in their notions about God, (a being so vastly above the apprehensions of sense) ; while they conceive no otherwise of him at best but as of some great king or prince ruling with a worldly majesty and grandeur over such puny mortals as themselves. Whereupon, as they frame to themselves no other idea of him but such as they borrow from the royal estate of an earthly sovereign, so they conceive also of their own relation to him and dependence upon him just as they do of that which passes between such a sovereign and his subjects.

And, consequently, since they find that there is no prince upon earth so absolute but that he stands in as much need of his subjects for many things as they do or can stand in need of him for his government and protection (by reason whereof there must needs follow a reciprocal exchange of offices and a mutual supply of wants between them, rendering both parties equally necessary to one another).

I say, from these misapplied premises, the low, gross, undistinguishing reason of the generality of mankind presently infers that the creature also may,

on some accounts, be as beneficial to his Creator as such a subject is to his prince, and that there may be the like circulation of good turns between them, they being (as they think) within their compass, as really useful to God, as God for his part, is beneficial to them, which is the true notion of merit or of being profitable to God, a conceit that sticks so close to human nature that neither philosophy nor religion can wholly remove it ; and yet if we consider the limited right which the greatest prince upon earth has over his meanest slave, and that absolute, boundless, paramount right which God has over the very same things and persons which such princes avow a claim to, and by virtue of which transcendent right something is God's which can never be theirs, and even what is theirs is still by a much higher title his. I say, if we consider this, the absurdity and inconsequence of all such discourses about the relation between God and man as are taken from what we see and observe between man and man, as governing and governed, is hereby more than sufficiently proved. And yet, absurd, fallacious, and inconsequent as this way of discoursing is, it is one of the chief foundations of the doctrine of merit, and consequently of the religion of too great a part of the world—a religion tending only to defraud men of their true Saviour, by persuading them that they may be their own.

And thus much for the first particular, the thing

supposed in the words, to wit, that men are naturally very prone to persuade themselves that they are able to merit of God or be profitable to him.

II. We have something expressed, namely, that such a persuasion is utterly false and absurd, and that it is impossible for men to merit of God or be profitable to him. And this I shall evince by showing the several ingredients of merit, and the conditions necessary to render an action meritorious. Such as are these four that follow ; as,

First, that an action be not due ; that is to say, it must not be such as a man stands obliged to the doing of, but such as he is free either to do or not to do, without being chargeable with the guilt of any sinful omission in case he does it not : it being no ill account given of merit by Spanhemius, the elder, that it is *opus bonum indebitum faciens præmium debitum ex indebito* ;* for otherwise, if that which is due may also merit, then, by paying what I owe, I may make my creditors my debtors, and every payment would not only clear but also transfer the debt.

Besides, that in all the benefactions passing from Almighty God upon such as serve him the best they can, there can be no such thing as liberality, which can never take place but where something is given which the receiver cannot challenge : nay, very hardly

* A good deed, not due, making a reward due, because it was not our duty.—*Dub. Evang.* part 3, p. 782.

could there be any such thing as gift. For if there be first a claim, then, in strictness of speech, it is not so properly gift as payment. Yea, so vast would be the comprehension of justice, that it would scarce leave any object for favour. But God's grace and bounty being so prevented by merit, would be spectators rather than actors in the whole work of man's salvation. Nor would our obedience to God's positive precepts only, but also to his negative, sometimes strike in for their share of merit and claim a reward. And any one who could plead such a negative righteousness might come and demand a recompence of God for not drinking, swearing, or blaspheming, just as the Pharisee did for not being as the very dregs of sinners, and so vouch himself meritorious, forsooth, for being a degree or two short of scandalous. Moreover, amongst men it would pass for an obligation between neighbours that one of them did not rob or murder the other ; and a sufficient plea for preferment before kings and governors not to have deserved the gibbet and the halter, which is a poor plea indeed, when to have deserved them proves oftentimes a better. In short, upon these terms, he who is not the very worst of villains must commence presently a person of a peculiar worth ; and bare indemnity will be too low a privilege for the merit of not being a clamorous, overgrown malefactor.

But now that all that any man alive is capable of doing is but an indispensable homage to God, and not

a free oblation, and that also such an homage as makes his obligation to what he does much earlier than his doing of it, will appear both from the law of nature and that of God's positive command. Of each of which a word or two.

There is nothing that nature proclaims with a louder and more intelligent voice than that he who gives a being, and afterwards preserves and supports it, has an indefeasible claim to whatsoever the said being so given and supported by him either is, or has, or can possibly do. But this is a point which I must be more particular upon, and thereby lay a foundation for what I shall argue *à fortiori* concerning God himself from what is to be observed amongst men. Now the right which one man has to the actions of another is generally derived from one or both of these two great originals, production or possession. The first of which gives a parent a right over the actions of his child, and the other gives a master a title to whatsoever can be done by his servant; which two are certainly the principal and most undoubted rights that take place in the world.

Both of these are eminently and transcendently in God as he stands related to men. *First*, by production. By the purest and most entire communication of being God did not only produce but create man; he gave him an existence out of nothing, and while he was yet but a mere idea or possibility in the mind of his eternal Maker. That one expression of the psalm-

ist, "It is he who hath made us, and not we ourselves," being both a full account and an irrefragable demonstration of his absolute sovereignty over our persons, and his incontestable claim to all our services. Nor is this the utmost measure of our obligation to him ; but as he first drew us out of nothing and non-existence, so he ever since keeps us from relapsing into it ; his power brought us forth, and his providence maintains us. And thus has this poor impotent creature been perpetually hanging upon the bounty of his great Creator, and, by a daily preservation of his precarious being, stands obliged to him under the growing renewed title of a continual creation.

But this is not all. There is yet another title whereby one person obtains a right to all that another can do, and that is possession ; a title every whit as transcendently in God as the former, as being founded in and resulting from his forementioned prerogative of a creator, nothing being more unquestionable than that the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, as the psalmist declares.* He is the sole proprietor and grand landlord of the universe. And, moreover, as all things were made by him, so they were made for him also ; he made all things for himself, says the wisest of men.† He is the original efficient by which, and the great and last end for which, they are ; for by him they begun, and in him they terminate. After which two essential relations

* Psalm xxiv. 1.

† Prov. xvi. 4.

born by God to man on the one side, and obliging man to God on the other, can there be anything that is good either in the being or actions of the latter which can be called perfectly his own? anything which is not entirely due to God, and that by a complication of the most binding and indispensable titles? and if so, how and where can there be any room for such a thing as merit?

The civil law tells us that servants have not properly a *jus*, a right or title, to anything by virtue whereof they can implead or bring an action against their lord upon any account whatsoever; every such servant as the law here speaks of being not only his master's vassal, but also part of his possessions. And this right our Saviour himself owns, and sets forth to us by a parable, couching under it as strong an argument: "Which of you (saith he) having a servant ploughing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not."* Where we see upon what terms of right even the most diligent and faithful servant stands with his master, who, after he had been toiling all day in his master's business, dressing and

* Luke xvii. 7-9.

manuring his grounds, and watering them with the drops of his brow, comes home at length hungry and tired (where if he could find no reward for his hard service, yet, one would think that he might at least expect a discharge from any further work, and receive the present refreshments of his natural food) ; yet even then his master renews his employment, delays his repast, and commands him to serve and attend him at his table, and with weary limbs and an empty stomach to expect a dismissal at his pleasure ; and all this without so much as any thanks for his pains. In which neither is the master unjust nor the servant injured, for he did no more than what his condition obliged him to ; he did but his duty, and duty certainly neither is nor can be meritorious.

Thus, I say, stands the case amongst men according to the difference of their respective conditions in this world. And if so, must not the same obligation, as it passes between God and man, rise as much higher as the condition of a creature founds an obligation incomparably greater than that of a bare servant possibly can ? And, therefore, since man stands bound to God under both these titles, to wit, of production and possession, how can there be a greater paradox than for such a contemptible, forlorn piece of living dirt to claim anything upon the stock of merit from Him who is both his master and his maker too ? No ; the very best of men, upon the very best of their services, have no other plea before God but

prayer ; they may indeed beg an alms, but must not think to stand upon their terms.

Not only the law of nature and the reason of the thing itself, as we have sufficiently shown, excludes a man from all plea of merit, but also that further obligation lying upon him, and all his services from the positive law and command of God, equally cuts him off from the same. The known voice of that law being, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."* And then for the measure and extent of that service: it is to be with all the heart, and all the strength, and all the soul,† which one comprehensive injunction, grasping in it all that human nature is able to do, and by consequence bringing all that can be done by man within the compass and verge of duty, has left no vacancy or possibility for merit to take place till it be proved that a man may actually do more than with all his heart, and all his strength, and all his soul he is able to do ; than which it is impossible even for common sense to conceive anything more senseless and contradictory.

And so I proceed to the

Second condition required to render an action meritorious, and that is, that it should really add to and better the state of the person of whom it is to merit ; the reason of which is, because all merit, as we have shown before, consists properly in a right to receive some benefit on the account of some benefit first

* Matt. iv. 10.

† Mark xii. 30.

done; the natural order of things requiring that where a considerable advantage has been received, something of a like nature should be returned. For otherwise, if one part of the world should be always upon the receiving hand and never upon the restoring, that part would be a kind of monstrous dead weight upon the other, and all that was good and useful to mankind would, by an enormous disparity, lean wholly on one side.

But to bring the forementioned condition of merit home to our present purpose, and thereby to show how far God is capable of receiving from man, and man of giving to God, it may not be amiss briefly to represent to ourselves what God is, and what man is, and by consequence how the case of giving and receiving must stand on God's part, and how on man's. And here

I. God offers himself to our consideration as a being infinitely perfect, infinitely happy, and self-sufficient; depending upon no supply, or revenue, from abroad; but, as I may so express it, retreating wholly into himself, and there living for ever upon the inexhaustible stock of his own essential fulness. And as a fountain owes not its streams to any poor, adventitious infusions from without, but to the internal, unfailing plenties of its own springs, so this mighty, all-comprehending being which we call God needs no other happiness but to contemplate upon that which he actually is, and ever was, and shall be possessed of.

From all which it follows, that the Divine nature and beatitude can no more admit of any addition to it than we can add degrees to infinity, new measures to immensity, and further improvements to a boundless, absolute, unimprovable perfection ; for such a being is the great God, who is one of the parties whom we are now discoursing of.

2. Let us cast our eye upon the other party concerned, and consider whether man be a being fit and able to make this addition ; man, I say, that poor, slight, inconsiderable nothing, or at best a pitiful something, beholden to every one of the elements, as well as compounded of them, and living as an eleemosynary upon a perpetual contribution from all and every part of the creation ; this creature clothing him, another feeding him, a third curing him when sick, and a fourth comforting and refreshing him when well. In a word, he subsists by the joint alms of heaven and earth, and stands at the mercy of everything in nature which is able either to help or hurt him.

And is this now the person who is to oblige his Maker ? to indent and drive bargains with the Almighty ? Those, I am sure, who, in their several ages, have been reputed most eminent for their knowledge of God and of themselves too, used to speak at much another rate concerning both. " My goodness," says David, " extendeth not to thee."* And

* Psa. xvi. 2.

again, "If thou be righteous," says Elihu to Job, "what givest thou him? or what does he receive at thy hands?"* So that St. Paul might well make that challenge without expecting ever to see it answered, "Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?"† For let man but first prove the debt, and the Almighty will be sure to pay it. But most fully of all does our Saviour himself determine this point in that remarkable conclusion of the forecited parable where he instructs his disciples, after they had done all that was commanded them, to acknowledge themselves unprofitable servants,‡ that is to say, such as God, upon no account whatsoever, was or could be at all the better for. And a clearer text certainly, and more direct and home against all pretence of merit, neither law nor gospel can afford.

Nevertheless, it must be confessed, that some have found out such an exposition of it as, if admitted, renders it of no force at all against this doctrine of merit. For, first, they absolutely cashier the literal, express sense of the words, and in the room of it introduce a figure called by the Greeks *meiosis*, which, to diminish or degrade a thing, expresses it in terms representing it much less than indeed it is; as when we say a thing is smaller than an atom, less than nothing, and the like, such words are not to be understood literally, but import only that the thing spoken

* Job xxxv. 7.

† Rom. xi. 35.

‡ Luke xvii. 10.

of is very inconsiderable. Accordingly, when Christ bids his disciples, after their best and most exact performances, acknowledge themselves unprofitable servants, we are not, say these expositors, to conclude from hence that really they were so, but that Christ only read them a lecture of humility and self-abasement towards God in speaking but meanly and lowly of their own piety, how differently soever it might deserve to be valued according to the strict estimate of the thing itself. So that by all this, it seems, our Saviour was only teaching those about him how to pass compliments upon Almighty God, their professing of themselves unprofitable servants amounting to no more than if they had told him they were his humble servants; the meaning of which words, if they have any meaning at all, the fashionable custom of genteel lying will much better account for than the language of Scripture (the word of truth) is able to do. But in the mean time, what an insufferable perversion of the written word is it to affix such a sense to any text of it as this forced exposition here does, which manifestly turns a most devout confession to Almighty God into a piece of courtship; a principal truth into a mere trope or figure; and, in a word, one of the highest duties of a Christian into a false, fulsome, and, at best, an empty expression.

And so I pass to the

Third condition required to render an action meritorious, and that is, that there be an equal proportion

of value between the action and the reward. This being evident from the foundation already laid by us, to wit, that the nature of merit consists properly in exchange, and that, we know, must proceed according to a parity of worth on both sides, commutation being most properly between things equivalent. But now, the prize we run for in all our religious performances is no less a thing than life eternal and a beatific enjoyment of God himself for ever ; and can any man, not quite abandoned by his reason, imagine a few weak, broken actions a competent price for heaven and immortality, and fit to be laid in the balance with an exceeding and eternal weight of glory ? Is there anything in dust and ashes that can deserve to dwell with God and to converse with angels ? or can we, who live by sense and act by sense, do anything worthy of those joys which not only exceed our senses, but also transcend our intellects ? Can we do beyond what we can think, and deserve beyond what we can do ? for, let us rate our best and most exact services according to the strict rules of morality, and what man is able to carry so steady a hand in any religious performance as to observe all those conditions that are absolutely necessary to answer the full measures of the law ? No ; this is such a pitch of acting as the present strengths of nature must not pretend to ; and if not, how can an action, short of complete morality, set up for meritorious ?

The Papists, we know, in their disputes upon this subject, distinguish of merit into that which is *de condigno*, which merits a reward upon terms of justice and by reason of the inherent worth and value of the work done, and that on the other side to be *de congruo*, which, though it cannot claim a reward upon those terms and from the precise worth and value of the work itself, yet is such that God would not act suitably and congruously to the equity and goodness of his nature if he should not reward it. These two sorts of merit, I say, they hold, but are not yet agreed which of the two they should state the merit of their good works upon. For some boldly assert that they merit the former way, to wit, by their own inherent worth and value; and some, that they merit only the latter way, that is, by being such as the equity and goodness of God cannot but reward; and, lastly, others (as particularly Bellarmine) hold that they merit both ways, to wit, partly by condignity, and partly by congruity.

In answer to which, without disputing anything against their merit of condignity (since it more than sufficiently confutes itself), I utterly deny the whole foundation of their merit *de congruo* as to any obligation on God's part to reward our religious services upon the score of equity, since upon that account God can be under no obligation to do anything, forasmuch as there is no such thing as equity in God distinct from his justice and mercy; and the exercise

of his mercy must on all hands needs be granted to be free, how much soever that of his justice may by some be thought otherwise.

Amongst men, I confess, there is such an obligation as that of equity, and the reason is because men stand obliged by a superior law to exercise mercy as well as justice, which God does not ; and, therefore, though there may be such a thing as a *meritum de congruo* between man and man, yet between God and man (since God is under no obligation to show mercy where his own word has not first obliged him) no such merit can take place.

But, besides, this is not the point, whether or no it be congruous to the goodness of God for him to reward such or such actions. For there may be many thousands of things and actions very congruous for God to do, which yet, by his nature, he is not obliged to do, nor ever will do ; so that the bare congruity of any thing or action to the Divine nature lays no obligation upon God to do it at all. But the point lies here, to wit, whether it be so congruous to God to reward the obedience and good actions of men that it is incongruous to his nature not to do it, and this I utterly deny. For if it were incongruous to his nature not to reward them, it would be necessary for him to reward them, and then indeed merit must, upon equal necessity, take place ; but if God be not bound to reward every act which it may be suitable or congruous for him to reward, as we have

shown that he is not, then *meritum de congruo* is but merit equivocally so called, and the forementioned division of merit is not a division of a genus into two several species, but only a distribution of an equivocal term into its several significations ; and, consequently, to give the name of merit, with respect to God, to that which is so only *de congruo*, is a mere trifling about words without any regard had to the sense of them. Nor let any one here object the frequent use of the terms *mereri* and *meritum* by the fathers and other ancient church writers, for they use them not in a sense importing claim upon the score of strict justice, but only as they signify the actual obtainment of anything from God, upon the stock of free promise, by coming up to the conditions of it, which by no means reaches that sense of the word which we have been hitherto disputing against. In short, therefore, the question stands thus :—Does this *meritum de congruo*, from the nature of the thing itself, oblige God to reward it, or does it not ? If it does, then I am sure that merit of condignity does the same, and can do no more ; and so the distinction between them is but verbal and superfluous. But if, on the other hand, it does not oblige God, then I affirm that it is not so much as merit ; for where there is no obligation on one side, there can be no merit on the other. To which we may add this further consideration, that the asserting of such a merit of congruity is altogether as arrogant as to assert that of condignity, forasmuch

as it equally binds God and brings him under as great a necessity of rewarding as the other can, and that not by reason of his own free word and promise obliging him to it, of which more anon, but because of a certain worth and value inherent in the work itself, which makes it incongruous, and consequently impossible, for God not to reward it, since it must needs be impossible for him to do anything incongruous to himself or to any of his attributes.

From all which it follows, that the third condition required to make an action meritorious is here failing also, which is, that the excellency of the work be commensurate to the value of the reward. And so I am come at length to the .

Fourth and last condition or ingredient of merit, and that is, that he who does a work whereby he would merit of another, does it solely by his own strength, and not by the strength or power of him from whom he is to merit ; the reason of which is, because otherwise the work would not be entirely a man's own, and where there is no property there can be no exchange ; all exchange being the alienation of one property or title for another ; and I have all along shown that the nature of merit is founded in commutation.

But now, how great a hand, or rather what a total influence God has in all our actions, that known maxim jointly received both by heathens and Christians sufficiently demonstrates, namely, that in him

we live, and move, and have our being; and so intimately and inseparably does this influence join itself with all the motions of the creature that it puzzles the deepest and most acute philosophers to distinguish between the actions of second causes and the concurrence of the first, so as to rescue them from a downright identity. Accordingly the apostle tells us that "it is God who worketh in us not only to do, but also to will according to his good pleasure."* And if in every good inclination, as well as action, God be the worker, we must needs be the recipient subjects of what is wrought, and to be recipient certainly is not meritorious.

In all the actions of men, though we naturally fix our eye only upon some visible agent, yet still there is a secret invisible spring which is the first mover of, and conveys an activity to, every power and faculty, both of soul and body, though it be discerned by neither. Upon which account it is that St. Austin says that "in all that God does for us, he only crowns his own works in us;" the same hand still enabling us to do which shall hereafter reward us for what we have done. And if, according to these terms, and those words also of the spouse to the same purpose, "Draw me, and I will follow thee,"† our coming to God be from nothing else but from his drawing us to himself, how can we merit of him by our following him or coming to him? For can any one oblige me

* Phil. ii. 13.

† Song of Sol. i. 4.

by a present bought with my own money? or by giving me that which I first gave him? And yet the case here is much the same. For as apt as we are to flatter ourselves, and to think and speak big upon the subject, yet, in truth, by all that we do or can do, we do but return God something of his own. Much like the rivers, which come rolling with a mighty noise and pour themselves into the sea, and yet, as high as they swell, and as loud as they roar, they only restore the sea her own waters ; that which flows into her in one place having been first drawn from her in another. In a word, can the earth repay the heavens for their influences, and the clouds for that verdure and fertility which they bestow upon it? Or can dirt and dung-hills requite the sun and the light for shining upon them? No, certainly ; and yet what poor shadows and faint representations are these of that infinitely greater inability, even of the noblest of God's creatures, to present him with anything which they were not first beholden to him for. It is clear, therefore, that since man in all his duties and services never had anything of his own to set up with, but has trafficked all along upon a borrowed stock, the fourth and last condition required to make his performances meritorious utterly fails him.

And thus I have distinctly gone over the several conditions of merit. As first, that the meritorious act be not due ; secondly, that it really add to and better the condition of him from whom it merits ; thirdly,

that there be a parity of value between the work and the reward ; and fourthly and lastly, that it be done by the sole strength of him who merits, and not by the help and strength of him from whom he merits. These four, I say, are the essential ingredients and indispensable conditions of merit. And yet not one of them all agrees to the very best of man's actions with reference to Almighty God. Nevertheless, in despite of all these deplorable impotences, we see what a towering principle of pride works in the hearts of men, and how mightily it makes them affect to be their own saviours, and even while they live upon God to depend upon themselves : to be poor and proud being the truest character of man ever since the pride of our first parents threw us into this forlorn condition. And thus I have finished the second and main particular proposed from the words, and expressed in them, namely, that it is impossible for men, by their best services, to merit of God or be profitable to him.

I proceed now to the

III. Particular, which exhibits to us something by way of inference from the two former, to wit, that this persuasion of man's being able to merit of God is the source and foundation of two of the greatest corruptions of religion that have infested the Christian church, and those are Pelagianism and Popery. And,

First, for Pelagianism. It chiefly springs from and

is resolvable into this one point, namely, that a man contributes something of his own, which he had not from God, towards his own salvation ; and that not a bare something only, but such a something also as is the principal and most effectual cause of his salvation. For that which he receives from God, according to Pelagius, is only a power to will and to do, which a man may very well have, and carry to hell with him, as those who go to hell no doubt do. But that which obtains heaven, and actually saves a man, is the right use of that power, and the free determination of his will, which, as the same Pelagius teaches, a man has wholly from himself, and accordingly may wholly thank himself for. So that in answer to that question of the apostle, "Who made thee to differ from another?"* the Pelagian must reply, if he will speak pertinently and consistently with himself, "Why, I made myself to differ by using the powers which God gave me as I should do, which my neighbour did not, and for that reason I go to heaven and he to hell ; and as he can blame none but himself for the one, so I am beholden to none but myself for the other."

This, I say, is the main of the Pelagian divinity, though much more compendiously delivered in that known but lewd aphorism of theirs, *A Deo habemus quòd sumus homines, à nobis autem ipsis quòd sumus justi.*† To which we may add another of their prin-

* 1 Cor. iv. 7.

† We owe it to God that we are men ; but to ourselves that we are just men.

ciples, to wit, that if a man does all that naturally he can do (still understanding hereby the present state of nature), God is bound in justice to supply whatsoever more shall be necessary to his salvation; which premises, if they do not directly and unavoidably infer in man a power of meriting of God, the world is yet to seek what the nature and notion of merit is. Accordingly both Gelasius and St. Austin, in setting down the points wherein the Catholic Church differed from the Pelagians, assign this for one of the chief, that the Pelagians held *Gratiam Dei secundum hominum merita conferri*.* And the truth is, upon their principles a man may even merit the incarnation of Christ; for if there be no saving grace without it, and a man may do that which shall oblige God in justice to vouchsafe him such grace (as with no small self-contradiction these men use to speak), then let them qualify and soften the matter with what words they please, I affirm that upon these terms a man really merits his salvation, and, by consequence, all that is or can be necessary thereunto.

In the mean time, throughout all this Pelagian scheme we have not so much as one word of man's natural impotency to spiritual things (though inculcated and wrote in both Testaments with a sunbeam), nor, consequently, of the necessity of some powerful divine energy to bend, incline, and effectually draw man's will to such objects as it naturally resists and is averse to; not a word, I say, of this or anything

* That the grace of God is conferred upon men according to merit.

like it (for those men used to explode and deny it all, as their modern offspring amongst us also do). And yet this is passed for sound and good divinity in the church in St. Austin's time, and within less than a hundred years since in our church too ; till Pelagianism and Socinianism, Deism, Tritheism, Atheism, and a spirit of innovation, the root of all, and worse than all, broke in upon us, and by false schemes of models, countenanced and encouraged, have given quite a new face to things, though a new face is certainly the worst and most unbecoming that can be set upon an old religion. But,

Second, to proceed to another sort of men famous for corrupting Christianity more ways than one, to wit, those of the Church of Rome, we shall find that this doctrine of man's being able to merit of God is one of the chief foundations of Popery also. Even the great Diana, which some of the most experienced craftsmen in the world do with so much zeal sacrifice to and make shrines for, and by so doing get their living, and that a very plentiful and splendid one too ; as knowing full well that without it the grandeur of their church (which is all their religion) would quickly fall to the ground. For if there be no merit of good works, then no supererogation ; and if no supererogation, no indulgences ; and if no indulgences, then it is to be feared that the silversmith's trade will run low, and the credit of the Pontifical bank begin to fail ; so that the very marrow, the life, and spirit of Popery lies

in a stiff adherence to this doctrine, the grand question still insisted upon by these merchants being *quid dabitis*, and the great commodity set to sale by them being merit. For can any one think that the pope and his cardinals, and the rest of their ecclesiastical grandees, care a rush whether the will of man be free or no (as the Jesuits state the freedom of it on the one side, and Dominicans and Jansenists on the other), or that they at all concern themselves about justification and free grace, but only as the artificial stating of such points may sometimes serve them in their spiritual traffic, and now and then help them to turn the penny? No; they value not their schools any further than they furnish their markets, nor regard any gospel but that of Cardinal Palavicini, which professedly owns it for the main design of Christianity to make men as rich, as great, and as happy as they can be in this world. And the grand instrument to compass all this by is the doctrine of merit. For how else could it be that so many in that communion should be able to satisfy themselves in doing so much less than they know they are required to do for the saving of their souls, but that they are taught to believe that there are some again in the world who do a great deal more than they are bound to do, and so may very well keep their neighbour's lamp from going out by having oil enough both to supply their own and a comfortable overplus besides to lend, or, which is much better, to sell, in such a case? In a word, take

away the foundation, and the house must fall ; and, in like manner, beat down merit, and down goes Popery too. And so at length (that I may not trespass upon your patience too much) I descend to the

IV. and last particular proposed at first from the words which was to remove an objection naturally apt to issue from the foregoing particulars. The objection is obvious, and the answer to it needs not be long. It proceeds thus :

If the doctrine hitherto advanced be true, can there be a greater discouragement to men in their Christian course than to consider that all their obedience, all their duties and choicest performances, are nothing worth in the sight of God, and that they themselves, after they have done their best, their utmost, and their very all in his service, are still, for all that, useless and unprofitable, and such as can plead no recompence at all at his hands ? This you will say is very hard ; but to it I answer :

First, That it neither ought nor used to be any discouragement to a beggar, as we all are in respect of Almighty God, to continue asking an alms, and doing all that he can to obtain it, though he knows he can do nothing to claim it. But,

Second, I deny that our disavowing this doctrine of merit cuts us off from all plea to a recompence for our Christian obedience at the hands of God. It cuts us off indeed from all plea to it upon the score of con-

dignity and strict justice ; but then should we not, on the other side, consider whether God's justice be the only thing that can oblige him in his transactions with men ? For does not his veracity and his promise oblige him as much as his justice can ? And has he not positively promised to reward our sincere obedience ? Which promise, though his mere grace and goodness induced him to make, yet his essential truth stands obliged to see performed. For though some have ventured so far as to declare God under no obligation to inflict the eternal torments of hell* (how peremptorily soever threatened by him) upon men dying in their sins, yet I suppose none will be so hardy, or rather shameless, as to affirm it free for God to perform or not perform his promise ; the obligation of which being so absolute and unalterable, I do here further affirm that, upon the truest and most assured principles of practical reason, there is as strong and as enforcing a motive from the immutable truth of God's promise to raise men to the highest and most heroic acts of a Christian life, as if every such single act could by its own intrinsic worth merit a glorious eternity. For, to speak the real truth and nature of things, that which excites endeavour, and sets obedience on work, is not properly a belief, or persuasion of the merit of our works, but the assurance of our reward. And can we have a greater assurance of this than that truth itself, which cannot break its word,

* Tillotson.

has promised it? For the Most High and Holy One (as we have shown and may with reverence speak) has pawned his word, his name, and his honour, to reward the steadfast, finally-persevering obedience of every one within the covenant of grace, notwithstanding his legal imperfection.

CONCEALMENT OF SIN NO SECURITY TO THE SINNER.

Be sure your sin will find you out.—Numb. xxxii. 23.

OF all the ways to be taken for the prevention of that great plague of mankind, sin, there is none so rational and efficacious as to confute and baffle those motives by which men are induced to venture upon it ; and, amongst all such motives, the heart of man seems chiefly to be overpowered and prevailed upon by two, to wit, secrecy in committing sin, and impunity consequent upon it.

Accordingly, Moses, in this chapter, having to deal with a company of men suspected guilty of a base and fraudulent design, though couched under a very fair pretence (as most such designs used to be), he endeavours to dash it in its very conception by particularly applying himself to encounter those secret ratiocinations and arguments which he knew were the most likely to encourage them in it ; and this he does very briefly, but effectually, by assuring them that how covertly and artificially soever they might carry

on their dark project; yet their sin should infallibly find them out.

The subject and occasion of the words is indeed particular, but the design of them is manifestly of an universal import, as reaching the case of all sinners in the world in their first entrance upon any sinful act or course. And, therefore, I shall consider them according to this latter and more enlarged sense, casting the prosecution of them under these three following heads, as—

I. I shall show that men generally, if not always, proceed to the commission of sin upon a secret confidence of concealment or impunity.

II. I shall show the grounds and reasons upon which men take up such a confidence. And

III., and lastly, I shall show the vanity of this confidence, by declaring those several ways by which, in the issue, it comes certainly to be defeated.

Of each of which in their order.

I. And first for the first of them; to wit, that men generally, if not always, proceed to the commission of sin upon a secret confidence of concealment or impunity.

For the better handling of which proposition, I shall lay down these two assertions:

1. That no man is induced to sin, considered in itself as a thing absolutely or merely evil, but as it bears some resemblance or appearance of good in the

apprehensions of him who commits it. Certain it is that there can be no real good in sin ; but if it had no shadow, no show of good, it could not possibly be made the object of a human choice, the will of man never choosing or embracing anything under the proper notion of evil. But then, as to the kind of this good : if we would know what that is, it is also as certain that no man can be so far deluded, or rather besotted in his judgment, as to imagine that sin can have anything of moral good in it ; forasmuch as that imports a direct contradiction to the very nature, notion, and definition of sin ; and, therefore, besides that, philosophy, we know, owns and asserts two other sorts of good, to wit, pleasing and profitable : good being properly the denomination of a thing as it suits with our desires or inclinations. According to which acceptation of the word, whatsoever pleases or profits us may, upon that general account, be called good, though otherwise it swerves from the stated rules and laws of honesty and morality ; and, upon the same ground, sin itself, so far as it carries either pleasure or profit with it, is capable of being apprehended by the mind of man as good, and, consequently, of being chosen or embraced by the will as such.

2. The other assertion to be laid down is, that God has annexed two great evils to every sin, in opposition to the pleasure and profit of it ; to wit, shame and pain. He has, by an eternal and most

righteous decree, made these two the inseparable effects and consequents of sin. They are the wages assigned it by the laws of heaven ; so that whosoever commits it ought to account shame and punishment to belong to him as his rightful inheritance ; for it is God who has joined them together by an irreversible sentence, and it is not in the power or art of man to put them asunder.

And now, as God has made these two evils the sure consequents of sin, so there is nothing which the nature of man does so peculiarly dread and abhor as these ; they being indeed the most directly and absolutely destructive of all its enjoyments, forasmuch as they reach and confound it in the adequate subject of enjoyment, the soul and body—shame being properly the torment of the one and pain of the other. For the mind of man can have no taste or relish of any pleasure in the world while it is actually oppressed and overwhelmed with shame ; nothing does so keenly and intolerably affect the soul as infamy ; it drinks up and consumes the quickness, the gaiety, and activity of the spirits ; it dejects the countenance, made by God himself to look upwards, so that this noble creature, the masterpiece of the creation, dares not so much as lift up either his head or his thoughts, but it is a vexation to him even to look upon others, and yet a greater to be looked upon by them.

And as shame thus mortifies the soul, so pain or punishment (the other twin effect of sin) equally

harasses the body. We know how much misery pain is able to bring upon the body in this life, in which our pains and pleasures, as well as other things, are but imperfect ; there being never a limb or part, never a vein or artery of the body, but it is the scene and receptacle of pain, whensoever it shall please God to unfence it, and let in some sharp disease or distemper upon it. And so exceedingly afflictive are these bodily griefs, that there is nothing which affects the body in the way of pleasure in any degree comparable to that which affects it in the way of pain. For is there any pleasure in nature which equals the impressions of the gout, the stone, or even of the tooth-ache itself? But then, further, when we shall consider that the pains which we have here mentioned, and a great many more, are but the *preludiums*, the first-fruits and beginnings of that pain which shall be infinitely advanced and finally completed in the torments of another world, when the body shall descend into a bed of fire and brimstone, and be lodged for ever in the burning furnace of an Almighty wrath, this consideration surely will, or ought to, satisfy us that God will not be behindhand with the sinner in point of punishment, whatsoever promises his sin may have made him in point of pleasure.

And now, if we put these two assertions laid down by us together—as first, that no man ever engages in sin but as he apprehends in it something of pleasure or advantage ; and secondly, that shame and pain are

by God himself made the assured consequents of sin, which are utterly inconsistent with, and destructive of, all such pleasure or advantage—it must needs follow from hence that the will cannot possibly choose sin so long as the understanding is under a full conviction or persuasion that shame and punishment shall certainly follow the commission of it ; for no man, doubtless, is so furiously bent upon his lust, or any other infamous passion, as to attempt the satisfaction of it in the market-place, or in face of the sun and of the world, or with the sword of the avenger applied to his heart.

Coveteousness, we all know, is a blinding as well as a pressing and a bold vice ; yet certainly it could never blind nor infatuate any one to that degree as to make a judge take a bribe upon the bench or in the open sight of the court. No ; no man is so far able to conquer and cast off those innate fears which nature has thought fit to bridle and govern the fury of his affections by, as to bid defiance to an evil which his best and strongest reasonings assure him to be unsupportable, and therefore his apprehension must be, some way or other, first unshackled from a belief of these evils before his will and his choice can be let loose to the practice of sin. And does not this give us a most philosophical as well as true account of the infinite reasonableness of the Scriptures charging all sin on unbelief, as the first root and source of men's apostacy from God ? For let men think and say

what they will, yet when they venture upon sin they do not really believe that God will ever revenge it upon them. They may, indeed, have some general, faint, speculative belief of hell and damnation ; but such a belief as is particular and practical, and personally applies and brings it home to their own condition, this they are void of ; and it is against the methods of reason and nature for any man to commit sin with such a belief full and fresh upon his spirit ; and, consequently, the heart must prevaricate and shift off these persuasions the best it can, in order to its free passage to sin ; and this can by no other means be so effectually done as by promising itself secrecy in sin, and impunity or escape after it. For these two reach and remove all a man's fears, by giving him security against those two grand terrifying effects of sin, shame and pain. Assure but the sinner that he shall neither be discovered nor punished, and presently the reins lie loose upon all his appetites, and they are free to take their full swing in all enormities whatsoever. But yet, since this is not to be effected without the help of some arguments and considerations which may have something of show, at least, to delude, though nothing of strength to convince the reason, therefore,

II. We shall now, under our next head, endeavour to give some account of those fallacious grounds upon which the sinner is apt to take up such a confidence

as to believe that he shall be able to carry off his sin clear, without either discovery or retribution ; and, no doubt, weak and shallow enough we shall find them all, and such as could never persuade any man to sin, did not his own love to sin persuade him much more forcibly than all such considerations ; some of which are these that follow, as—

1. First, men consider the success which they have actually had in the commission of many sins, and this proves an encouraging argument to them to commit the same for the future, as naturally suggesting this to their thoughts—that what they have done so often, without either discovery or punishment, may be so done by them again ; for nothing does so much confirm a man in the continuance of any practice as frequent experience of success in what he does, the proper genuine result of this being confidence.

Some men indeed stumble in their very first entrance upon a sinful course ; and this their disappointment frequently proves their cure, by making them to retreat and draw off timely, as being disheartened with so unfortunate a beginning. And it is, no doubt, the singular mercy and indulgence of God to such thus to cross and turn them out of the paths of destruction, which, had they found smooth, safe, and pleasurable, the corruption of their hearts would have infallibly engaged them in them to their lives' end. That traveller, surely, has but little cause to complain who, by breaking a leg or an arm at his

first setting out upon an unfortunate journey, prevents the losing of his head at his journey's end ; it being but a very uncomfortable way of travelling, to finish one's journey and one's life together. Great reason, therefore, have they to own themselves particularly favoured by Providence who have been stopped and withstood by it in the very first attempts of any sin, and thereby snatched, as it were, a brand out of the fire, or, which is yet better, have been kept from ever falling into it. Their being scorched has prevented their being burnt, while the fright caused by the danger they so narrowly escaped has been always fresh upon their memories ; and such as come to be thus happily frightened into their wits are not so easily fooled out of them again. In short, all frustration in the first essays of a vicious course is a baulk to the confidence of the bold undertaker. And, therefore, on the contrary, when God is pleased to leave a man under the full sway and power of any vice, he does not concern his providence to lay any block or impediment in such an one's way, but suffers him to go on and succeed in his villany, to effect all his projects, and compass the full satisfaction of his lewd desires. And this flushes him up, and makes him hard and insensible, and that makes him venturous and daring, and so locks him fast in the embraces of his sin ; while he has not the least surmise of the sadness of the issue, and that the present sweets of sin will and must be bitterness in the end ; but, like a sot in a tavern, first drinks

himself drunk, and then forgets that there is a reckoning to be paid.

Such an one the devil accounts he has fast enough; and for that cause none shall so studiously endeavour to promote a man's quiet and success in sin as he who at present tempts him to it, and will hereafter torment him for it. For the devil desires not that the sinner should feel any trouble for sin till he comes to feel it for good and all in that place which is designed only for payment and not amendment, and where all that he can do or suffer to eternal ages can contribute nothing to his release. And, therefore, that the sinner may sleep on soundly in his sin, the devil will be sure to make his bed soft enough. It is said of the Spaniard that there are two things much accounted of and desired by many in the world, which yet he heartily wishes his enemy; one is, that if he be a gamester, he may win; the other, that if he be a courter of women, he may obtain his desires; for that he knows well enough that either of these courses will in all likelihood prove his undoing at long run. In like manner, when the devil has the management of a sinner, he will spread his wing over him so that he shall never be alarmed with dangers, disgraces, and other calamitous effects of sin, if the officious tempter can ward them off, but shall pursue his vice with ease, safety, and reputation.

And while the sinner can do so, such is the proneness of man by nature to deceive himself in a thing

which he passionately desires, that having thus acquitted himself to himself, he takes it for granted that God will acquit him too. "Because," says the wise man, "sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."* Here he gives us an account of the secret reasoning of most sinners' hearts, namely, that because God does not confound them in the very act of sin by some immediate judgment, therefore they resolve upon a more audacious progress in it, and so sing Agag's requiem to themselves, that surely the bitterness of death is past. But much surer will such find it, that no man's being past fear makes him past feeling too, nor that the distance of an evil abates the certainty of it. And yet the great Knower of Hearts ascribes men's resolution to sin to such reasonings as these, as sottish and absurd as they are; so that in the 50th Psalm, having reckoned up several flagitious practices, he adds, in the 21st verse, "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence, and thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." God's silence, it seems, passes with such for his consent; and his not attacking the guilty wretch by a present execution makes him conclude that Heaven has passed an act of oblivion upon all his rogueries, so that henceforth he shall live and die a prosperous, indemnified villain, and his sin never find him out. In which case cer-

* Eccles. viii. 11.

tainly for a sinner thus to presume to absolve himself from his own sins is itself a greater sin than any of those which he can pretend to absolve himself from. But,

2. A second ground upon which men are apt to persuade themselves that they shall escape the stroke of Divine justice for their sins, is their observation of the great and flourishing condition of some of the topping sinners of the world. They have seen perjury and murder nestle themselves into a throne, live triumphant, and die peaceably ; and this makes them question whether God will ever concern himself to revenge that hereafter which he seems so much to connive at and countenance here, especially since men are so generally apt to judge of things and persons according to the present face and appearance of them, that they make the present the sole measure of the future, guide their hopes and their fears by what they actually see and feel, and, in a word, make their outward senses the rule and ground of their inmost ratiocinations.

For could we hear the secret language of most men's thoughts, we should hear them making such kind of answers and replies to the checks of conscience dissuading them from sin, and laying the danger of it before them, as these :—Pray what mischief befell such an oppressor, such a tyrant, or such a rebel ? And who passed his life with more affluence and jollity than such an epicure, such a money-

monger, such a tally-broker and cheater of the public? And have not some dexterous accountants got estates and made their fortunes by a clever stroke or two of their pen, and by a skilful mistake wrote themselves £40,000 or £50,000 richer than they were before in a trice? And did not that discreet Roman, Verres, lighting into a wealthy province, plunder and carry off from thence enough to serve himself, his friends, and his judges too? And why may not others, whose parts lie the same way, follow such lucky examples, and the thriving hypocrites of the present age find as fair quarter from God and man as any of the former? With such considerations as these, if they may be called so, men commonly arm themselves against all the threatenings of the Divine judgments, and think that in the strength of them they can warrant the most resolute pursuit of their vices for safe and rational. They see not the smoke of the bottomless pit, and so dread not the fire.

Flourishing sinners are, indeed, plausible arguments to induce men to sin; but, thanks be to God, that for a sinner to spend and end his days flourishing is a privilege allowed by him to very few, and those only such as are likely to be much lower in the other world than ever they were high in this. But,

3. As we have shown how mightily men are heartened on to their sins by the successful example of others as bad as themselves, or perhaps worse, so the next ground upon which such are wont to promise

themselves security, both from the discovery and punishment of their sins, is the opinion which they have of their own singular art and cunning to conceal them from the knowledge, or, at least, of their power to rescue them from the jurisdiction, of any earthly judge. The eye of man, they know, is but of a weak sight and a short reach, so that he neither sees in the dark, nor pierces into the cabinet-council and corner-practices of his neighbours ; and, therefore, these sons of darkness, who love to work as well as walk in the dark, doubt not but to contrive and cast the commission of their villanies under such sure coverts of secrecy that they shall be able to laugh at all judges and witnesses, and defy the inspection of the most curious and exact enquirers. And this makes them proceed to sin with such bravadoes in their hearts as these : Who shall ever see, or hear, or know what I do ? The sun itself, the eye of the world, shall never be conscious to my actions ; even the light and the day shall be strangers to my retirements ; so that, unless the stones I tread upon cry out against me, and the beam out of the wall accuse, and my own clothes arraign me, I fear no discovery. This is the language, these the inward boasts of secret, or, rather, self-befooled sinners.

But now, what if such strange things as these should sometimes come to pass, and it should so fall out (as it will appear by-and-bye) that even these dumb, inanimate things are sometimes unaccountably

enabled to clamour and depose against the guilty wretch, so that, to the amazement of the world, he is drawn forth into public view out of all his lurking holes and pavilions of darkness? Why then, upon such surprising accidents as these, some have yet a further asylum to fly to, and reckon that their power and interest shall protect them, and so secure the sinner, notwithstanding the discovery of the sin. And the truth is, if matters stand so with them that the height of their condition equals the height of their crimes, what care such ungodly great ones whether or no their sins are known, so long as their persons must not be touched? No; so far are such from excusing or covering their lawless practices, that they choose rather to own and wear them in the eye of the world as badges of their power and marks of such a greatness as has set itself above the reach of either shame or fear. Even treason itself dreads not a discovery if the overgrown traitor be but mighty enough to bear it out; but it shall walk abroad openly, and look the world in the face undauntedly, with all the consciousness of a clamorous guilt, and yet with the confidence of innocence itself. For we must know that it is not mere guilt, but guilt weak and disarmed which exposes an offender to the merits of his offence; they are only the *minorum gentium malefici*, malefactors of a lower form, who break the law and are hanged for it. Whereas, let a crime be never so foul and so notorious, yet if the wary criminal has so armed and

encompassed himself with friends and money as to stave off all approaches of justice, howsoever his sin may find him out, yet he persuades himself that his punishment cannot, and that is as much as he cares for. For a man's debts will never frighten him if the officer dares not arrest him, and he will hardly fear breaking the law who knows that he can trample upon it too. But,

4. The fourth and last ground which I shall mention of men's promising themselves security from the punishment of their sins, is a strong presumption that they shall be able to repent and make their peace with God when they please; and this they fully reckon will keep them safe, and effectually shut the door against their utmost fears, as being a reach beyond them all. For let a man be never so deeply possessed with a belief of God's sin-revenging justice, never so much persuaded that all the wrath which the curse of the law can threaten or inflict, is most certainly entailed, not upon sin only in general, but also upon his own sin in particular; nay, let damnation be always present to his thoughts, and the fire of hell continually flaming in his apprehensions, yet all this shall not be able to take him off from his resolution to sin and his confidence of escape, because he has an argument in reserve which he thinks will answer all, to wit, an after-repentance; for if this shall interpose between the commission of sin and the punishment of it, he concludes, upon the stock of all God's promises

to the penitent, that he is past danger, and, consequently, has outwitted the law and the curse, and so stands *rectus in curiâ*, in spite of all the threatenings of death and damnation.

And as he thus reckons that repentance will secure him, so he doubts not but he can command that when he will, as according to the doctrine of Pelagius and his modern admired followers he certainly may; repentance in their divinity being a work entirely in the power of the sinner's will. So that now the sinner's main business must be to time his repentance artificially and to retreat opportunely before the hand of vengeance be actually upon him; and if he can but prevent, and be too nimble for that, why then he comes off clear and successful, with flying colours, having enjoyed the pleasures and advantages of his sin without enduring anything of the smart or sad consequences of the same.

But now, how wretched an inference this is for any man to form to himself and thereby to mock and defy Heaven! and yet how deep it lies in the hearts of most sinners may easily be observed by men of sense, and will be sadly rued by such as are not so when it is too late; for this is manifestly the great fort and castle, the citadel and strong tower, which the soul has built to itself, to repair to whensoever it has a mind to sin both with delight and security too. And were it not for this, it would be impossible for any considering man to satisfy himself in his continuance in

any known sin for one moment ; for he could not, with any consistence with that mighty over-ruling principle of self-preservation, commit a sin if he assuredly knew or believed that he should be damned for it ; which yet, since the infinitely just and true God has most peremptorily decreed and threatened, unless repentance shall intervene, it is evident that his whole refuge must lie in the intervention of that which also, he persuades himself, shall in due time step in between him and the fatal blow. And this very consideration utterly evacuates the terrifying force of the Divine threatening, and by promising the sinner a fair issue of things, both here and hereafter, makes the poor, self-deluding, and deluded creature conclude that his sin shall never find him out.

And thus having shown some of those fallacious grounds upon which men use to build their confidence of the concealment, or at least of the impunity of their sins, I proceed now to the

III. and last general head at first proposed by us, which was to show the vanity of such a confidence, by declaring those several ways by which, in the issue, it comes certainly to be defeated, and that both with reference to this world and the next.

And first, for this world : there are various ways by which it comes to be disappointed here, as

I. The very confidence itself of secrecy is a direct and natural cause of the sinner's discovery ; for con-

fidence in such cases causes a frequent repetition of the same action, and if a man does a thing frequently it is odds but some time or other he is discovered ; for by this he subjects himself to so many more accidents, every one of which may possibly betray him. He who has escaped in many battles has yet been killed in the issue ; and by playing too often at the mouth of death has been snapped by it at last.

Add to this that confidence makes a man venturous, and venturousness casts him into the high road of danger and the very arms of destruction ; for while a man ventures he properly shuts the eyes of his reason ; and he who shuts his own eyes lies so much the more open to those of other men.

2. There is sometimes a strange, providential concurrence of unusual, unlikely accidents for the discovery of great sins ; a villany committed perhaps but once in an age, comes sometimes to be found out also by such an accident as scarce happens above once in an age. For there are some sins more immediately invading the great interests of society, government, and religion, which Providence sets itself in a more peculiar manner to detect and bring to light, in spite of all the coverings which art or power can cast over them, such as are murder, perjury, and sacrilege ; and more particularly for murder ; in what a strange, stupendous manner does Providence oftentimes trace it out, though concealed with all the closeness which

guilt and skill and the legerdmain of a well packed and paid jury can secure it by.

Such small, such contemptible, and almost unobservable hints have sometimes unravelled and thrown open the mysterious contexture of the deepest laid villanies, and delivered the murderer into the hands of justice by means which seemed almost as much above nature as the sin committed was against it.

And the like instances might be given in many other crying sins, which sometimes cry so long, and so loud too, that they come at length to be seen as well as heard, and to alarm the earth as well as pierce heaven. "Curse not the king, no not in thy thought," says the wise man, "for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter,"* though some, I confess, are of opinion that such as have no wings are much nimbler and quicker in carrying and telling these matters than such as have. But to keep to these remarkable words now before us : if the bird upon the house-top shall be able to tell what is done or whispered within the house, and these inhabitants of the air shall have keys to our chambers and our closets, nay, and to our very hearts too, how can there be such a thing in the world as secrecy ? As the truth is, setting aside all tropes and hyperboles, there is but very little. And then, if such informers as these find out the treason, we may be sure that the treason itself will not fail to find out the traitor.

* Eccles. x. 20.

For let a criminal seem never so safe in his own thoughts, and in the thoughts of all about him, yet still he must know that the justice of God has him in chase, and will one day show that it never hunts surer than when the politicians of the world think it upon a cold scent ; for how many strange, intricate, and perplexed villanies have been ripped up, and spread far and near, which the subtle actors of them, both before, and in, and after the commission, fully believed could not possibly be discovered ? Whereas, on the contrary, it is most certain that no man, though never so crafty and sagacious, can propose to himself such great unlikelihoods for the discovery of any action, but others, altogether as crafty, have actually failed and miscarried under the very same or greater.

And therefore the psalmist, most appositely to our present purpose, observes that “the sinner flatters himself in his own eyes till his iniquity be found out.”* That is the issue ; and no wonder if such a practice comes to such an end.

For whosoever flatters himself, cheats and betrays himself by false reasonings, and by not dealing clearly and impartially with himself, but grounding his presumption of secrecy upon arguments represented to him much firmer and stronger than his own experience, severely judging, would allow them to be. For, if such an one finds an accident highly impro-

* Psa. xxxvi. 2.

bable, he will presently screw it up from thence to impossible, and then conclude that in so vast a number of contingencies one of a million shall never hit his case ; and very probably it may not. But what if it should ? Why then one such unlucky event will fully pay the reckoning for all former escapes, and one treason or felony discovered will as certainly bring his neck to the block or the halter as a thousand, were they all of them crowded together into one and the same indictment against him.

3. God sometimes makes one sin the means of discovering another, it often falling out with two vices, as with two thieves or rogues, of whom it is hard to say which is worse, and yet one of them may serve well enough to betray and find out the other. How many have, by their drunkenness disclosed their thefts, their lusts, and murders, which might have been buried in perpetual silence had not the sottish committers of them buried their reason in their cups ? For the tongue is then got loose from its obedience to reason, and commanded at all adventures by the fumes of a distempered brain and a roving imagination, and so presently pours forth whatsoever they shall suggest to it, sometimes casting away life, fortune, reputation, and all in a breath.

And how does the confident sinner know but the grace of God, which he has so often affronted and abused, may some time or other desert and give him up to the sordid temptations of the jug and the bottle,

which shall make the doors of his heart fly open, and cause his own tongue to give in evidence against him for all the villanies which had lain so long heaped up and concealed in his guilty breast? For let no man think that he has the secrets of his own mind in his own power while he has not himself so, as it is most certain that he has not who is actually under a debauch ; for this confounds and turns all the faculties of the soul topsy-turvy, like a storm tossing and troubling the sea, till it makes all the foul black stuff which lay at the bottom to swim and roll upon the top.

In like manner the drunken man's heart floats upon his lips, and his inmost thoughts proclaim and write themselves upon his forehead ; and, therefore, as it is an usual and indeed a very rational saying, that a liar ought to have a good memory, so, upon the like account, a person of great guilt ought to be also a person of great sobriety, lest otherwise his very soul should, some time or other, chance to be poured out with his liquor ; for commonly the same hand which pierces the vessel broaches the heart also, and it is no strange or unusual passage from the tavern to the gaol.

4. God sometimes infatuates and strikes the sinner with frenzy, and such a distraction as causes him to reveal all his hidden baseness, and to blab out such truths as will be sure to be revenged upon him who speaks them ; in a word, God blasts and takes away his understanding for having used it so much to the dishonour of Him who gave it, and delivers him over

to a sort of madness too black and criminal to be allowed any refuge in Bedlam. And for this there have been several fearful instances of such wretched contemners of heaven as having, for many years, out-faced all the world, both about them and above them too, with a solemn look and a demure countenance, have yet at length had their loathsome inside turned outwards, and been made an abhorred spectacle to men and angels. For it is but just with God when men have debauched their consciences to bereave them of their senses also, and to disturb and disarm their reason so as to disable it from standing upon its guard, even by that last and lowest sort of self-defence, the keeping of its own counsel ; for no chains will hold a madman's tongue, no fetters can restrain the ramble of his discourse, nor bind any one faculty of his soul or body to its good behaviour, but all that is within him is promiscuously thrown out, and his credit, with all that is dear to him, is at the mercy of this unruly member, as St. James calls it, which, in the present case, has no mercy upon him to whom it belongs, nor anything to govern it but a violent, frantic humour, wholly unable to govern itself.

5. God sometimes lets loose the sinner's conscience upon him, filling it with such horror for sin as renders it utterly unable to bear the burden it labours under without publishing, or rather proclaiming, it to the world.

For some sorts of sin there are which lie burning

and boiling in the sinner's breast, like a kind of Vesuvius, or fire pent up in the bowels of the earth, which yet must and will, in spite of all obstacles, force its way out of it at length ; and thus, in some cases of sin, the anguish of the mind grows so exceeding fierce and intolerable, that it finds no rest within itself, but is even ready to burst till it is delivered of the swelling secret it labours with ; such kind of guilt being to the conscience like some offensive meats to the stomach, which no sooner takes them in but it is in pain and travail till it throws them out again.

Who knows the force, the power, and the remorseless rage of conscience, when God commissions it to call the sinner to an account !—how strangely it will sift and winnow all his retirements !—how terribly it will wring and torture him, till it has bolted out the hidden guilt which it was in search of ! All which is so mighty an argument of the prerogative of God over men's hearts, that no malefactor can be accounted free, though in his own keeping, nor any one concealed, though never so much out of sight ; for still God has his sergeant, or officer, in the sinner's breast, who will be sure to attack him as soon as ever the great Judge shall but give the word ; an officer so strictly true to his trust, that he is neither to be softened nor sweetened, neither to be begged nor bought off, nor, consequently, in a word, fit to be of the jury when a rich or potent malefactor comes to be tried in hopes to be brought off.

And this also shows the great importance and wisdom of that advice of Pythagoras, namely, that every man, when he is about to do a wicked action, should, above all things in the world, stand in awe of himself and dread the witness within him, who sits there as a spy over all his actions, and will be sure, one day or other, to accuse him to himself, and perhaps put him upon such a rack as shall make him accuse himself to others also.

For this is no new thing, but an old experimented case ; there having been several in the world whose conscience has been so much too hard for them, that it has compelled them to disclose a villanous fact, even with the gibbet and the halter set before their eyes, and to confess their guilt, though they saw certain and immediate death the reward of that confession.

But most commonly has conscience this dismal effect upon great sinners at their departure out of this world ; at which time some feel themselves so horribly stung with the guilty sense of some frightful sin, that they cannot die with any tolerable peace till they have revealed it, finding it some small relief (it seems) and easement of their load to leave the knowledge of their sin behind them, though they carry the guilt of it along with them.

6. and lastly. God sometimes takes the work of vengeance upon himself, and immediately, with his own arm, repays the sinner by some notable judgment

from heaven ; sometimes, perhaps, he strikes him dead suddenly ; and sometimes he smites him with some loathsome disease ; and sometimes, again, he strangely blasts him in his name, family, or estate, so that all about him stand amazed at the blow ; but God, and the sinner himself, know well enough the reason and the meaning of it too.

Justice, we know, uses to be pictured blind, and therefore it finds out the sinner, not with its eyes, but with its hands ; not by seeing, but by striking. And it is the honour of the great attribute of God's justice, which he thinks so much concerned, to give some pledge or specimen of itself upon bold sinners in this world, and so to assure them of a full payment hereafter, by paying them something in the way of earnest here.

And the truth is, many and marvellous have been the instances of God's dealing in this manner, both with cities and whole nations ; for when a guilt has spread itself so far as to become national, and grown to such a bulk as to be too big for all control of law, so that there seems to be a dispute whether God or sin governs the world, surely it is then high time for God to do his own work with his own hand, and to assert his prerogative against the impudent defiers of it by something every whit as signal and national as the provocation given, whether it be by war, plague, or fire (all which we have been visited with, though neither corrected nor changed by), and to let the com-

mon nuisances of the age, the professed enemies of virtue and religion, and the very blots and scandal of human nature itself, know that there still remains upon them a flaming guilt to account for, and a dreadful Judge to account to.

And thus I have gone over several of those ways by which a man's sin overtakes and finds him out in this world. As first, the very confidence itself of secrecy is a direct and natural cause of the sinner's discovery. Secondly, there is sometimes a strange, providential concurrence of unusual, unlikely accidents for the bringing to light great villanies. Thirdly, God sometimes makes one great sin the means to detect and lay open another. Fourthly, God sometimes infatuates and strikes the sinner with frenzy, and such a distraction as makes him reveal all his hidden guilt. Fifthly, God sometimes lets loose the sinner's conscience upon him, so that he can find no rest within himself till he has confessed and declared his sin. Sixthly and lastly, God sometimes smites and confounds him by some notable, immediate judgment from heaven.

These, I say, are some of the chief ways by which God finds out the sinner in this life. But what now if none of all these should reach his case, but that he carries his crimes all his life closely, and ends that quietly, and perhaps, in the eye of the world, honourably too, and so has the good luck to have his shame cast into and covered under the same ground with his carcass? Why yet, for all this, the man has not

escaped ; but his guilt still haunts and follows him into the other world, where there can be no longer a concealment of it, but it must inevitably find him out. For as in Daniel, "When the judgment shall be set, the books shall be also opened,"* even those dooms-day books, as I may so call them, wherein God has kept a complete register of all the villanies that were ever committed against him, which then shall be displayed and read aloud in the audience of that great and terrible court ; the consideration of which, surely, may well put those excellent words of the apostle, with this little alteration of them, into our mouths, "What fruit can we [now] have of those things whereof we shall [then] be ashamed?"† So, what advantage of pleasure, profit, or honour, can the sinner promise to himself from any sin which may be laid in the balance against that infinite and incredible weight of reproach with which it will certainly pay him home at that day?

For, could he persuade the mountains to cover him, or could he hide himself in the bosom of the great deep, or could he wrap himself in the very darkness of hell, yet still his sin would fetch him out of all, and present him naked, open, and defenceless before that fiery tribunal where he must receive the sentence of everlasting confusion, and where the devil himself will be sure to do him justice, as never failing to be a most liberal rewarder of all his pimps and vassals for the secret service done him in this world.

And now, what is the whole foregoing discourse

* Dan. vii. 10.

† Rom. vi. 21.

but a kind of panegyric (such a mean one as it is) upon that glorious thing, innocence? I say, innocence, which makes that man's face shine in public whose actions and behaviour it governs in private. For the innocent person lives not under the continual torment of doubts and fears lest he should be discovered, for the light is his friend, and to be seen and looked upon is his advantage ; the most retired parts of his life being like jewels, which, though indeed most commonly kept locked up in the cabinet, yet are then most admired and valued when shown and set forth by the brightness of the sun as well as by their own.

How poor a thing secrecy is to corrupt a rational man's behaviour, has been sufficiently declared already by the survey which we have taken of those several ways whereby the most wise and just Governor of the world is pleased to defeat and befool the confidence of the subtlest and the slyest of sinners. We have seen, also, what paper walls such persons are apt to enclose themselves with, and how slight, thin, and transparent all their finest contrivances of secrecy are ; while, notwithstanding all the private recesses and dark closets which they so much trust in, the windows of heaven are still open over their heads. And now, what should the consideration of all this do, but every minute of our lives remind us so to behave ourselves as under the eye of that God who sees in secret and will reward us openly ?

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST FOR THE SINS OF HIS PEOPLE.

A SERMON PREACHED ON GOOD FRIDAY, AT CHRIST CHURCH, OXON,
BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY.

For the transgression of My people was He stricken.—Isa. liii. 8.

THIS great and eloquent prophet, the evangelist of the Jewish Church, as, without any impropriety, he may be called, from the 13th verse of the foregoing chapter to the end of this, seems wrapt up with the contemplation of a great person under strange and unusual afflictions, whose character, with all the heights of rhetoric which the genius of grief and prophecy together could raise him to, he here sets himself with full purpose to describe. In all which description there is no one passage which does not speak something extraordinary and supernatural of the person described, and withal represent the describer of it in the highest degree of ecstasy and rapture, so that nothing could transcend the height of

the expression but the sublimity of its subject. For still it fastens upon him the marks and tokens of something more than a man, indeed more than a creature, ascribing actions to him which surmount any created power, and so visibly, upon all principles of reason, above the strength and reach of the strongest arm of flesh, that if the person here spoken of be but a man, I am sure it requires the wit of more than a man to make sense of the prophecy.

Taking it for manifest, and that upon all the grounds of rational and unforced interpretation, that the person here spoken of was the Messiah, and that this Messiah could be no other than Jesus of Nazareth, the great Mediator of the second covenant, very God and very Man, in whom every tittle of this prophecy is most exactly verified, and to whom it does most peculiarly and incommunicably agree, we shall proceed to take an account of the several parts of the text, in which we have these three things considerable:

I. The suffering itself : he was stricken.

II. The nature of the suffering, which was penal and expiatory : he was stricken for transgression. And,

III. The ground and cause of this suffering, which was God's property in, and relation to, the persons for whom Christ was stricken, implied in this word, " My people "—" For the transgression of my people was he stricken."

Of each of which in their order. And,

I. For the suffering itself : he was stricken. The very word imports violence and invasion from without. It was not a suffering upon the stock of the mere internal weaknesses of nature, which carries the seeds and causes of its dissolution in its own bowels, and so by degrees withers and decays, and at length dies, like a lamp that, for want of oil, can burn no longer, but, like a torch in its full flame, beat and ruffled, and at length blown out by the breath of a north wind. So was Christ dealt with in the very prime and vigour of his years, being by main force torn and stricken out of the world. Blows did the work of time, and stripes and spears were instead of age to put a period to his afflicted life. Now the greatness of this suffering will be made out to us upon these three accounts :

First. Upon the account of the latitude and extent of it.

Second. Of the intenseness and sharpness of it. And,

Third. Of the person inflicting it.

First. As for the latitude or extent of it. The blow reached every part of his humanity, carrying the grief all over, till by an universal diffusion of itself it entered, according to the psalmist's expression, "like water into his bowels, or like oil into his bones." It spread itself into every part of his body, as if it had been another soul. Nothing was free from suffering that could suffer. Suffering seemed to be his

portion, his inheritance, nay, his very property. Even the religion that he came to propagate and establish was a suffering religion, and, by the severest method of establishment, he gave the first and the greatest instance of it in himself. He who would recount every part of Christ that suffered must read a lecture of anatomy. From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot there was nothing but the traces of pain and suffering ; “ they made long furrows upon his back,” says the psalmist ; they did, as it were, tear and plough up his innocent body. In his person we might have seen grief in its height and supremacy ; grief triumphant, crowned and arrayed in purple ; grief reigning and doing the utmost that it was able. It is a subject too well known, and too frequently discoursed of, to make descriptions of the thorns, the spears, and the nails, that acted their several parts in this tragedy, and that so that the very narrative of our Saviour’s passion cannot but beget another in every pious hearer of it.

But when we have said the utmost of his bodily sufferings we still know that nature has provided a support able to mate and stand up against all these, for the strength and firmness of a resolved mind will bear a man above his infirmity as the breath bears up the body from sinking ; but when the supporter itself fails, when the *primum vivens* and the *ultimum moriens* have had a mortal blow, and the iron enters into the very soul, then baffled nature must surrender

and quit the combat, unless seconded and held up by something greater and mightier than itself. And this was our Saviour's condition. There was a sword which reached his very spirit, and pierced his soul till it bled through his body, for they were the struggles and agonies of the inward man, the labours and strivings of his restless thoughts which cast his body into that prodigious sweat. For though it was the flesh that sweated, it was the spirit that took the pains ; it was that which was then treading the wine-press of God's wrath alone till it made him red in his apparel, and dyed all his garments with blood.

What thought can reach, or tongue express, what our Saviour then felt within his own breast ! The image of all the sins of the world for which he was to suffer, then appeared clear and lively and express to his mind. All the vile and horrid circumstances of them stood, as it were, particularly ranged before his eyes in all their dismal colours. He saw how much the honour of the great God was abused by them, and how many millions of poor souls they must inevitably have cast under the pressures of a wrath infinite and intolerable, should he not have turned the blow upon himself, the horror of which then filled and amazed his vast apprehensive soul ; and those apprehensions could not but affect his tender heart, then brimful of the highest zeal for God's glory and the most relenting compassion for the souls of men, till it fermented and boiled over with transport and agony, and even

forced its way through all his body into those strange ebullitions of blood not to be paralleled by the sufferings of any person recorded in any history whatsoever. It was this which drew those doleful words from him, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful," etc.; it was surrounded and, as it were, besieged with an army of sorrows; and, believe it, his soul was too big and of too strong a make to bend under an ordinary sorrow. It was not any of those little things which make us put the finger in the eye, as loss of estate, friends, preferment, interest, and the like, things too mean to raise a tumult in the breast of a resolved stoic, and much less in his, who both placed and preached happiness, not only in the want, but in the very defiance of them.

And now, after this, his agony in the garden, I need not much insist upon the wounds given his reputation by the sword of a blaspheming tongue, the sharpest of all others, and which, like a poisoned dagger, hurting both with edge and venom too, at the same time both makes a wound and prevents its cure. Even a guilty person feels the sting of a malicious report; and if so, much more must one who is innocent; and yet infinitely more must He who was not only innocent, but innocence itself. Reputation is tender, and for it to be blown upon is to be tainted; like a glass, the clearer and finer it is the more it suffers by the least breath. And therefore for Him who came to destroy the kingdom of Satan to be

traduced as a partner with and an agent for Beelzebub ; for Him, whose greatest repasts were prayer and abstinence and the most rigid severities upon himself, to be taxed as a wine-bibber and a good-fellow ; for Him who came into the world, both in life and death, to bear witness to the truth, to suffer as an impostor and a deceiver, what could be more grievous and afflicting to a great innocence joined with as great an apprehension !

However, his church gains this great advantage of comfort by it, that the worst of sufferings comes sanctified to our hands by the person of our grand Example, who was reviled and slandered and tossed upon the tongues of men before us—a greater martyrdom questionless than to be cast, as the primitive Christians were, to the mouths of lions, which are tender and merciful compared to the mouths of men, whether we look upon that bitter spirit which acted in those Jews, or in some Christians now-a-days worse than Jews ; men who seem to have outdone all before them in the arts of a more refined malice and improved calumny—qualities lately sprung up out of the stock of a spreading atheism and a domineering reigning sensuality, sins now made national and authentic, and so much both judgment and mercy-proof, that it is well if we can be cured without being cut off. But to return to the business before us. We have now seen the first thing setting forth the greatness of this suffering, to wit, the latitude and extent of

it, as that it seized both body and soul, and every part and faculty of both.

Second. The next thing declaring its greatness was the intenseness and sharpness of it. We have seen already how far it went ; we are now to consider how deep. It fell not on him like a dew or mist, which only wets the surface of the ground, but like a pouring soaking rain which descends into the very bowels of it. There was pain enough in every single part to have been spread in lesser proportions over the whole man ; Christ suffered only the exquisiteness and heights of pain without any of those mitigations which God is pleased to temper and allay it with as it befalls other men ; like a man who drinks only the spirits of a liquor separated and extracted from the dull unactive body of the liquor itself, all the force and activity, the stings and fierceness of that troublesome thing were, as it were, drained and distilled and abridged into that cup which Christ drank off. There was something sharper than vinegar and bitterer than gall which that draught was prepared and made up with.

We cannot indeed say that the sufferings of Christ were long in duration, for to be violent and lasting too is above the methods or measures of nature. But he who lived at that rate, that he might be said to live an age every hour, was able to suffer so too, and to comprise the greatest torments in the shortest space ; which yet by their shortness lost nothing of

their force and keenness, as a penknife is as sharp as a spear, though not so long.

That which promotes and adds to the impressions of pain, is the delicate and exact constitution of the part or faculty aggrieved. And there is no doubt but the very fabric and complexion of our Saviour's body was a masterpiece of nature, a thing absolutely and exactly framed, and of that fineness as to have the quickest and most sensible touches of every object ; and withal to have these advanced by the communion of his admirably made body with his high and vigorous intellectuals ; all which made him drink in pain more deeply, feel every lash, every wound, with so much a closer and a more affecting sense. For it is not to be doubted but a dull fellow can endure the paroxysms of a fever, or the torments of the gout or stone, much better than a man of a quick mind and an exalted fancy : because in one pain beats upon a rock or anvil, in the other it prints itself upon wax. One is even born with a kind of lethargy and stupefaction into the world, armed with an iron body and a leaden soul against all the apprehensions of ordinary sorrow, so that there is need of some pain to awaken such an one and to convince him that he is alive ; but our Saviour, who had an understanding too quick to let anything that was intelligible escape it, took in the dolorous afflicting object in its full dimensions. He saw the utmost evil of every one of those strokes which the guilt of our

sins inflicted on him ; and what his eye saw, his heart proportionably felt ; for surely they must needs have been inconceivably afflicting in the actual endurance, which were so dreadful in their very approach, that the horror of them put the Man of God's right hand, the Man made strong for that very purpose, to start back and decline the blow, could the avoidance of it have stood with the decrees of heaven. "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Which yet was not the voice of cowardice, but of human nature ; nature which, by its first and most essential principle, would have saved itself, might it have consisted with the saving of the world.

Third. The third thing setting forth the greatness of this suffering, is the cause and the author of it, which was God himself. The measure of every passion is the operation of the agent. And, then, we know what Omnipotence can do, Omnipotence employed, or rather inflamed by justice, in whose quarrel it was then engaged.

We must not measure the Divine strokes by the proportion of those blows which are inflicted by the greatest and most exasperated mortal, the condition of whose nature sets bounds to his power when it cannot to his rage, so that in the utmost executions of it he acts but like a wasp, very angrily indeed, but very weakly. Every blow inflicted by the fiercest tyrant can reach no farther than the body, and the body is but the dwelling-place, not any part of the

soul, and consequently can no more communicate its ruins to that, than a man can be said to be wounded in his person because a wall of his house was broken down ; upon which account there have been some whose souls have been so fortified with philosophy and great principles, as to enable them to laugh in Phalaris's bull, to sing upon the rack, and to despise the flames. For still, when God torments us by the instrumental mediation of the creature, his anger can fall upon us in no greater proportions than what can pass through the narrow capacities of a created being ; for, be the fountain never so full, yet, if it communicates itself by a little pipe, the stream can be but small and inconsiderable, and equal to the measures of the conveyance. God can no more give his power than his glory to another ; there is no mortal arm can draw his bow. God cannot thunder or lighten by proxy. He alone is the Father of spirits, and none can reach the conscience but he who made it ; and, therefore, being to discharge the utmost of his vindictive justice upon the sins of mankind then charged upon our Saviour, he took the sword into his own hand, entered the lists, and dealt with him immediately by himself.

And then we find the difference of our Saviour's suffering by the difference of his behaviour. While he was buffeted, scourged, and nailed to the cross, we hear nothing from him, but, "like a lamb before his shearers, he was dumb;" not because he could not,

but because he scorned to roar under the impressions of a finite anger. But when God reached forth his hand and darted his immediate rebukes into his very soul and spirit (as he did while he was hanging upon the cross), then he cries out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Silence upon such a loss would have been but stupidity, and patience an absurdity ; for when God withdrew his presence from him, that darkness which then covered the face of the whole earth was but a faint emblem of that blacker cloud of despair which had overcast his soul.

It is not possible for us to conceive the utmost weight of those heavy strokes inflicted by the Almighty himself upon our Saviour. All the representations and little draughts of them made by words and fancy are vastly short of the keen impressions of sense. But yet that which gives us the nearest resemblance of them, surely, is the torment of a guilty mind under a state of desertion, when God shall turn the worm of conscience into a scorpion and smite it with the secret invisible stings of his wrath, such as shall fester and rage inwardly, gnaw and rake the very entrails of the soul. The burden and anguish of this has sometimes been so insupportable, that some have professed themselves to envy the condition of Judas and the damned spirits, as thinking the endurance of those flames more tolerable than the expectation, and, accordingly, have done violence to their own lives, and so fled to hell as to a sanctuary, and chose damnation as

a release. Far were such persons, God knows, from bettering their condition by completing that which they could not bear in the very beginnings and foretastes of it ; yet, however, it demonstrates to us the unspeakable wretchedness of a guilty soul labouring under the hand of God. And, by the way, let the boldest, the hardiest, and the securest sinner know that God is able, without ever touching him either in his estate, his health, his reputation, or any other outward enjoyment dear to him, but merely by letting a few drops of his wrath fall upon his guilty conscience, so to scald and gall him with the lively sense of sin, that he shall live a continual terror to himself, carry about him a hell in his own breast, which shall echo to him such peals of vengeance every hour, that all the wine and music, all the honours and greatness of the world, shall not be able to minister the least ease to his heart-sick and desponding soul. Now, in these torments of a guilty conscience we have some little image of the pains then suffered by our Saviour, the greatness of both being founded upon the same reason, namely, that God is the sole and immediate inflicter of such strokes ; and then, surely, the suffering must needs be grievous when infinite justice passes sentence and infinite power does execution.

And thus I have finished the first general thing proposed from the text, which was the suffering itself, expressed in these words, "He was stricken," and that, by considering the latitude, the intenseness, and

also the cause of it ; all of them so many arguments to demonstrate to us its unparalleled greatness.

II. The second general thing proposed was the nature and quality of this suffering ; namely, that it was penal and expiatory : he was stricken for transgression. And, to prove that it was penal, there needs no other argument, to any clear, unbiassed understanding, than the natural, genuine, and unconstrained use of the word. For what other sense can there be of a man's being stricken or suffering for sin but his being punished for sin ? And that, I am sure, is spoke so plain and loud by the universal voice of the whole book of God, that Scripture must be crucified as well as Christ to give any other tolerable sense of it. But since heresy has made such bold invasions upon those sacred writings, we will consider both those senses which these words are asserted to be capable of.

I. First of all, then, some assert that to be stricken for transgression imports not here a punishment for sins past, but a prevention or taking away of sin for the future ; so that Christ is said to be stricken, to suffer, and to die for sin, because by all this he confirmed to us an excellent and holy doctrine, the belief of which has in it a natural aptness to draw men off from their sins ; in a word, because Christianity tends to make men holy and cease from sin, and because Christ, by his blood, sealed the truth of Christianity, therefore is he said to die for sin ; a strange and

remote deduction, and such an one as the common rules and use of speaking would never have suggested. But then, besides, it is easy to come upon the authors of this perverse interpretation by demanding of them what fitness there could be in Christ's death to confirm his doctrine, and what reason could the world have to believe Christianity true, because the author of it, a pious, innocent, excellent person, was basely and cruelly put to death.

Therefore, they further say, that this effect of its confirmation is really and indeed to be ascribed to his subsequent resurrection, though only his death be still mentioned, that being the most difficult and heroic passage of all that he either did or suffered for our sakes, and, consequently, the greatest instance of his patience and persuasion of the truth of that doctrine for which he suffered. But, by their favour, if Christ is said no otherwise to die for sin than because he delivered a doctrine, the design of which was to draw men off from sin, and which was confirmed to be true only by his resurrection, how comes it to pass that this effect is still joined with his death, but never with his resurrection? it being said, over and over, that he died for sin, suffered and bled for sin, but never that he rose again for sin. It is, indeed, said once, that he rose again for our justification; but in the very foregoing words it is said, that he was delivered to death for our offences; which shows those words, "for our offences," and, "for our justification," have there a very

different sense, and bear a different relation to the words with which they are joined in that, as well as in the other Scriptures. But this whole invention is so forced and far-fetched, and so much out of the road of common reason, that it is impossible it should gain but by the strength and prepossessions of prejudice; and where prejudice stands for judgment, for aught I see, it is as vain to urge arguments as to quote Scriptures.

2. The other sense of these words, and which alone the Catholic Church receives for true, is, that Christ's being stricken for sin signifies his being punished for sin. The word *for*, in this case, denoting the antecedent meritorious cause of his suffering, and not the final, as the school of Socinus does assert; and, consequently, must directly relate to the removal of the guilt of sin, and not the power, as is also affirmed by the same persons. Now that Christ's suffering and being stricken for transgression imports that suffering to have been penal and expiatory, as it might with the highest evidence be demonstrated from several Scriptures, so at this time I shall confine myself within the limits of the chapter from whence I took my text, and here I shall found the proof of it upon these two expressions.

First, that Christ is said to have borne our sins.* Now, to bear sin is an Hebrew phrase for that which in Latin is *luere peccatum*, and in English to be punished

* Ver. 12.

for sin. And if to bear another man's sin or iniquity by suffering does not imply the undergoing of the punishment due to that man's sin, we must invent a new way of expounding profane writers as well as sacred, and of interpreting the common speeches of men as well as the word of God.

Secondly, the other argument shall be taken from that expression which declares Christ to have been made a sacrifice, or an offering for sin : " When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin."* The proof of what I here affirm is grounded upon the use and design of a sacrifice, as it has been used by all nations in the world, which was to appease the Deity by paying down a life for sin, and that by the substitution of a sacrifice, whether of man or beast, to die and pay down his life instead of the sinner ; for there was a tacit acknowledgment universally fixed in the hearts of all mankind, that the wages of sin was death, and that without shedding of blood there could be no remission ; upon which was built the reason of all their sacrifices and victims. So surely, therefore, as Christ was a sacrifice, and as the design of a sacrifice is to pay down a life for sin, and as to pay down a life for sin is to be punished for sin, so sure it is that Christ's death and sufferings were penal. Now, it being clear that the foundation of all punishment is compensation or exchange, that is to say, something paid down to Divine justice for something done against it, and since

* Ver. 10.

all compensation implies a retribution equivalent to the injury done, therefore, that Christ might be qualified to be a sacrifice fit to undergo the full punishment due for the sins of mankind, two things were required.

i. An infinite dignity in his person ; for since the evil and demerit of sin was infinite, and since Christ was so to suffer for it as not to remain under those sufferings for an infinite duration, that infinity, therefore, was to be made up some other way, which could not be but by the infinite worth and dignity of his person, grasping in all the perfections and glories of the Deity, and, by consequence, deriving an infinite value to his sufferings.

ii. The other qualification required was a perfect innocence in the person to suffer ; for so much was specified by the paschal lamb, of which we still read in Scripture, that it was to be a lamb without blemish. And there is no doubt but had Christ had any sin of his own to have satisfied for, he had been very unable to satisfy for other men's. He who is going to gaol for his own debts, is very unfit to be a security for another's.

But now this perfect innocence, which I affirm necessary to render Christ a fit and proper sacrifice, is urged by our adversaries to be the very reason why Christ's sufferings could not be penal, since punishment, in the very nature and essence of it, imports a relation to sin. To this I answer, that punishment does indeed import an essential relation to sin, but

not of necessity to the sin of the person upon whom it is inflicted, as might be evinced by innumerable instances as well as undeniable reasons.

If it be replied, that God has declared that the soul that sins shall die, I answer, that this is only a positive law, according to which God declares he will proceed in the ordinary course of his providence, but it is not of natural and eternal obligation, so as universally to bind God in all cases, but that he may, when he pleases, deal otherwise with his creature. But this will receive further light from the discussion of the third and last general head, to which we now proceed, namely :

III. The ground and cause of this suffering, which was God's property in, and relation to, the persons for whom Christ suffered, specified in these words, "My people, for the transgression of my people was he stricken."

If it be here asked, upon what account the persons here spoken of were denominated and made God's people, I answer, that they were so by an eternal covenant and transaction between the Father and the Son, by which the Father, upon certain conditions to be performed by the Son, consigned over some persons to him to be his people. For our better understanding of which, we are to observe that the business of man's redemption proceeds upon a twofold covenant.

First. An eternal covenant made between the Father

and the Son, by which the Father agreed to give both grace and glory to a certain number of sinners, upon condition that Christ would assume their nature, and pay down such a ransom to his justice as should both satisfy for their sin, and withal merit such a measure of grace as should effectually work in them all things necessary to their salvation. And this covenant may be properly called a covenant of suretyship or redemption, upon which alone, and not upon any covenant made between God and men in their own persons, is built the infallibility of the future believing, repenting, and finally preserving of such as Christ from all eternity undertook to make his people.

Second. The other is a covenant made in time, and actually entered into by God and men, by which God on his part promises to men eternal salvation upon condition of faith and repentance on theirs. And this is called in Scripture the second covenant, or the covenant of grace, and stands opposed to that which is there called the first covenant, or the covenant of works.

Now by that eternal compact or transaction between the Father and the Son, of which alone we now speak, was this donation of a certain determinate number of persons made to Christ to be his people ; by virtue of which agreement or transaction he was in the fulness of time to suffer for them and to accomplish the whole word of their redemption from first to last. For to affirm that Christ died only to verify a

proposition—that whosoever believed should be saved—but in the meantime to leave the whole issue of things in reference to persons so loose and undetermined, that it was a question whether ever any one should actually believe, and very possible that none ever might ; and consequently that after Christ had suffered, had been stricken, and died for transgression, yet, for anything that he had done in all this, he might never have had a people ; this certainly is a strange and new Gospel, and such as the doctrine of our church seems utterly unacquainted with.

Having thus shown the foundation upon which the persons here spoken of are called by the prophet God's people, namely, an eternal covenant, in which God the Father and the Son mutually agreed upon the terms of their redemption, we are now to observe that the same thing that thus denominates and makes them God's people, makes them, under the same relation, to belong also to Christ, and that not only upon the account of his nature that he was God, but chiefly of his office, that he was their Mediator, which capacity made him equally concerned in that eternal covenant, he accepting and agreeing to those terms that were proposed and offered him by the Father, by his acceptance of which he became both a mystical head and a surety to those for whom he so undertook. And this relation of his to them was the cause why he both might be and actually was stricken by God for their transgression, without any violation of the Divine

justice, notwithstanding the perfect innocence of his person. For to render it just to inflict a punishment upon an innocent person instead of another, either of these two causes are sufficient :

An intimate conjunction between those persons, and that either natural, as between father and son, or political, as between king and people, and the like ; or,

The voluntary consent and will of an innocent person to undergo the punishment due to the nocent, as it is between man and his surety.

Accordingly, from that covenant by which the Father made over a certain number of persons to the Son to be his people, there arose this twofold relation of Christ to them :

1. Of a king to his people, or of a mystical head to his members ; so that legally and politically they suffered as really in Christ as the whole body suffers when the head is wounded or struck through with a dart.

2. The other relation is of a surety, so that the satisfaction paid down by Christ to God's justice for sin is, in estimation of law, as really accounted to be paid down by the saints as if they had paid it in their own persons.

And this is a further and withal a full answer to that objection formerly hinted from the innocence of Christ's person as if it rendered him incapable of punishment ; for his own free, voluntary consent to be

a surety for sinners, and responsible for all that Divine justice could charge them with, transferred the guilt and obligation from their persons to his own.

In a word, the compact between Christ and his Father made him a king, a mystical head, and also a surety to some certain persons ; and his being so made them his people, and their being his people did, upon that account, make it both just and equitable for him to suffer and to be stricken for their transgression, which is the result of the text, and the thing undertook by us to be proved.

I have now finished the several things proposed from the text, in which, having set before you how much Christ has suffered, and all for our sakes, I hope it will kindle the workings of a pious ingenuity in every one of our breasts. For I am sure if Christ's suffering for us were the doctrine, gratitude should make our readiness to suffer for him the application. Christianity I show was a suffering religion, and there are two sorts of suffering to which it will certainly expose every genuine possessor of it: the first is from himself, the second from the world.

And first, it will engage him in a suffering from himself, even that grand suffering of self-denial and mortification, the sharpest and most indispensable of all others, in which every Christian is not only to be the sufferer, but himself also the executioner. "He who is Christ's," says the apostle, "has crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." A severe disci-

pline, certainly, in which a man is to act his fiercest anger upon his dearest friends. For could nature ever yet suggest to any one the hatred of his own flesh, the crucifixion of his desires, and the stabbing of his most beloved affections? Nature indeed cannot, will not, prompt it; but Christianity, which rises many strains above nature, both must and will. The best sacrifice to a crucified Saviour is a crucified lust, a bleeding heart, and a dying corruption. We cannot bring, nor, indeed, does Christ expect, a recompence for what he has suffered for us; yet that which he will accept as if it were a recompence, is for us to deal cruelly with that body of sin which has caused the acting of all those cruelties upon him. Let the ambitious man lay his pride in the dust, the covetous man deposit his treasures in the banks of charity and liberality, and let the voluptuous epicure renounce his cups and his whores, and this will be a present to Heaven better than a whole hecatomb; nor could the fruit of his body fall so grateful a sacrifice upon God's altars as the sin of his soul. But it is like the jolly world about us will but scoff at the paradox of such practices, and explode them as madness and melancholy; yet let those sons of pleasure know that such as scorn to be thus melancholy in this world will have but little cause to be merry in the next.

The other kind of suffering in which Christianity will engage a man, is from the world. Such is the genius and nature of the Christian religion, that it

must unavoidably bring him who owns it in the power of it under temporal troubles and afflictions. "In the world," says Christ, "ye shall have tribulation." And he spoke it not so much by a spirit of prophecy as philosophy, and by an actual sight of it in its pregnant causes. For the contrariety of the principles and maxims of Christianity to those of the world cannot but engage men in such practices as shall also thwart the customs and modes which govern the actions of the world. But where there is contrariety there will be fighting, and where there is fighting, the weaker, I am sure, must suffer ; and generally the Christian is so in all worldly encounters, whose chief defensatives lie not in that armour that is sword-proof or bullet-proof, and who wears no breast-plate upon, but within his breast, that is, his innocence, his conscience, and his confidence in a reconciled God. Suffering is a thing which all men abhor, and that because they are ashamed of it ; and their being so is grounded upon this opinion, that to suffer, in the very nature of it, seems to impeach the suffering person, either in the reputation of his power or of his innocence ; that is, he suffers either because he is weak and cannot hinder it, or because he is faulty and so deserves it. But with every Christian Christ is an abundant answer to both these objections. For when we see Omnipotence hanging upon the cross, and God himself scourged and spit upon, and when we see Him who could have commanded fire from heaven, and

legions of angels to his rescue, yet surrendering himself quietly to the will of his murderers, surely no mortal man, who is but dirt and worms'-meat at the best, can pretend himself too great and too high to suffer. Again, when we behold virtue, innocence, and purity more than angelical, crucified between thieves and malefactors, shall any man whose birth and actions revile and speak him a sinner to his face, think himself too good to come under the cross, and to take his share in the common lot of Christianity? It is not the suffering itself, but the cause of it, that is dishonourable. Even in the worst and most shameful of sufferings, though the hangman does the execution, yet it is the crime alone which does the disgrace.

Christ commands us nothing, but he enforces it with arguments from his person as well as from his word; and it is well if we can make a due use of them. For God knows how soon he may call us from our easy speculations and theories of suffering to the practical experience of it; how soon he may draw us forth for persecution and the fiery trial. Only this we may be sure of, that if these things be brought upon us for his honour, it will be for ours too to endure them. And be our distresses never so great, our calamities never so strange and unusual, yet we have both our Saviour's example to direct, and his promise to support us, who has left it upon record in his everlasting gospel, that "if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him."

CHRIST THE FRIEND OF HIS DISCIPLES.

A SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY, AT CHRIST CHURCH,
OXON, 1664.

Henceforth I call you not servants ; for the servant knows not what his lord doth : but I have called you friends ; for all things that I have heard of my Father have I made known unto you.—John xv. 15.

WE have here an account of Christ's friendship to his disciples ; that is, we have the best of things represented in the greatest of examples. In other men we see the excellency, but in Christ the divinity of friendship. By our baptism and church communion we are made one body with Christ, but by this we become one soul.

Love is the greatest of human affections, and friendship is the noblest and most refined improvement of love, a quality of the largest compass. And it is here admirable to observe the ascending gradation of the love which Christ bore to his disciples, the strange and superlative greatness of which will appear

from those several degrees of kindness that it has manifested to man in the several periods of his condition.

Consider him antecedently to his creation ; while he yet lay in the barren womb of nothing, and only in the number of possibilities, and, consequently, could have nothing to recommend him to Christ's affection, nor show anything lovely but what he should afterwards receive from the stamp of a preventing love. Yet even then did the love of Christ begin to work, and to commence in the first emanations and purposes of goodness towards man ; designing to provide matter for itself to work upon, to create its own object, and, like the sun in the production of some animals,* first to give a being, and then to shine upon it.

Let us take the love of Christ as directing itself to man actually created and brought into the world ; and so all those glorious endowments of human nature, in its original state and innocence, were so many demonstrations of the munificent goodness of Him by whom God first made, as well as afterwards redeemed, the world. There was a consultation of the whole Trinity for the making of man, that so he might shine as a masterpiece, not only of the art, but also of the kindness of his Creator ; with a noble and a clear understanding, a rightly disposed will, and a train of affections regular, and obsequious, and perfectly conformable to the dictates of that high and

* An allusion to the old superstition that some Egyptian animals were engendered by the action of the sun upon the mud of the Nile.

Divine principle, right reason. So that, upon the whole matter, he stepped forth not only the work of God's hands, but also the copy of his perfections, a kind of image or representation of the Deity in small ; infinity contracted into flesh and blood, and, as I may so speak, the prelude and first essay towards the incarnation of the Divine nature.

But, lastly, let us look upon man, not only as created and brought into the world with all these great advantages superadded to his being, but also as depraved and fallen from them, as an outlaw and a rebel, and one that could plead a title to nothing but to the highest severities of a sin-revenging justice. Yet, even in this estate also, the boundless love of Christ began to have warm thoughts and actings towards so wretched a creature, at this time not only not amiable but highly odious.

While, indeed, man was yet uncreated and unborn, though he had no positive perfection to present and set him off to Christ's view, yet he was at least negatively clear, and, like unwritten paper, though it has no draughts to entertain, yet neither has it any blots to offend the eye, but is white and innocent, and fair for an after-inscription. But man, once fallen, was nothing but a great blur, nothing but a total universal pollution, and not to be reformed by anything under a new creation.

Yet see here the ascent and progress of Christ's love. For, first, if we consider man in such a loath-

some and provoking condition, was it not love enough that he was spared and permitted to enjoy a being, since not to put a traitor to death is a singular mercy? But, then, not only to continue his being, but to adorn it with privilege, and from the number of subjects to take him into the retinue of servants, this was yet a greater love; for every one that may be fit to be tolerated in a prince's dominions is not therefore fit to be admitted into his family, nor is any prince's court to be commensurate to his kingdom. But then, further, to advance him from a servant to a friend, from only living in his house to lying in his bosom; this is an instance of favour above the rate of a created goodness, an act for none but the Son of God, who came to do everything in miracle, to love supernaturally and to pardon infinitely, and even to lay down the sovereign while he assumed the Saviour.

The text speaks the winning behaviour and gracious condescension of Christ to his disciples in owning them for his friends who were more than sufficiently honoured by being his servants. For still these words of his must be understood, not according to the bare rigour of the letter, but according to the arts and allowances of expression, not as if the relation of friends had actually discharged them from that of servants, but that of the two relations, Christ was pleased to overlook the meaner, and without any mention of that, to entitle and denominate them solely from the more honourable.

For the further illustration of which we must premise this as a certain and fundamental truth, that, so far as service imports duty and subjection, all created beings, whether men or angels, bear the necessary and essential relation of servants to God, and, consequently, to Christ, who is God blessed for ever: and this relation is so necessary, that God himself cannot dispense with it, nor discharge a rational creature from it; for although consequentially, indeed, he may do so by the annihilation of such a creature, and the taking away his being, yet, supposing the continuance of his being, God cannot effect that a creature which has his being from, and his dependence upon him, should not stand obliged to do him the utmost service that his nature enables him to do. For to suppose the contrary would be irregular and opposite to the law of nature, which, consisting in a fixed unalterable relation of one nature to another, is, upon that account, even by God himself, indispensable. Forasmuch as having once made a creature, he cannot cause that that creature should not owe a natural relation to his Maker, both of subjection and dependence (the very essence of a creature importing so much), to which relation, if he behaves himself unsuitably, he goes contrary to his nature and the laws of it, which God, the author of nature, cannot warrant without being contrary to himself. From all which it follows, that even in our highest estate of sanctity and privilege, we yet retain the unavoidable

obligation of Christ's servants, though still with an advantage as great as the obligation where the service is perfect freedom ; so that, with reference to such a Lord, to serve and to be free, are terms not consistent only, but absolutely equivalent.

Nevertheless, since the name of servants has of old been reckoned to imply a certain meanness of mind as well as lowness of condition, and the ill qualities of many who served have rendered the condition itself not very creditable, especially in those ages and places of the world in which the condition of servants was extremely different from that which it is now amongst us, they being generally slaves, and such as were bought and sold for money, and, consequently, reckoned but amongst the other goods and chattels of their lord or master : it was for this reason that Christ thought fit to waive the appellation of servant here, as according to the common use of it amongst the Jews, and at that time most nations besides, importing these three qualifications, which being directly contrary to the spirit of Christianity, were by no means to be allowed in any of Christ's disciples.

The *first* whereof is that here mentioned in the text, viz., an utter unacquaintance with his master's designs, in these words: "The servant knows not what his lord doeth;" for seldom does any man of sense make his servant his counsellor, for fear of making him his governor too. A master, for the most part, keeps his choicest goods locked up from his servant,

but much more his mind. A servant is to know nothing but his master's commands, and in these, also, not to know the reason of them.

Neither is he to stand aloof off from his counsels only, but sometimes from his presence also ; and so far as decency is duty, it is sometimes his duty to avoid him. But the voice of Christ in his gospel is, "Come to me, all ye that are heavy laden." The condition of a servant staves him off to a distance, but the gospel speaks nothing but allurements, attractions, and invitation. The magisterial law bids the person under it "Go, and he must go;" but the gospel says to every believer, "Come, and he cometh." A servant dwells remote from all knowledge of his lord's purposes : he lives as a kind of foreigner under the same roof, a domestic, and yet a stranger too.

The name of servant, *secondly*, imports a slavish, ungenerous awe of mind, as it is in Romans, "God has not given us the spirit of bondage again to fear."* He who serves has still the low and ignoble restraints of dread upon his spirits, which, in business, and even in the midst of action, cramps and ties up his activity. He fears his master's anger, but designs not his favour. "Quicken me (says David) with thy free spirit:" it is the freedom of the spirit that gives worth and life to the performance. But a servant commonly is less free in mind than in condition ; his very will seems to be in bonds and shackles, and desire itself

* Rom. viii. 5.

under a kind of durance and captivity. In all that a servant does he is scarcely a voluntary agent but when he serves himself : all his services, otherwise, not flowing naturally from propensity and inclination, but being drawn and forced from him by terror and coercion. In any work he is put to, let the master withdraw his eye, and he will quickly take off his hand.

The appellation of servant, *thirdly*, imports a mercenary temper and disposition, and denotes such an one as makes his reward both the sole motive and measure of his obedience. He neither loves the thing commanded nor the person who commands it, but is wholly and only intent upon his own emolument. All kindnesses done him, and all that is given him over and above what is strictly just and his due, makes him rather worse than better. And this is an observation that never fails where any one has so much bounty and so little wit as to make the experiment : for a servant rarely or never ascribes what he receives to the mere liberality and generosity of the donor, but to his own worth and merit, and to the need which he supposes there is of him, which opinion alone will be sure to make any one of a mean, servile spirit insolent and intolerable.

And thus I have shown what the qualities of a servant usually are, or, at least, were in that country where our Saviour lived and conversed when he spake these words, which, no doubt, were the cause why he would not treat with his disciples, whom he designed

to be of a quite contrary disposition, with this appellation.

Come we, therefore, now, in the next place, to show what is included in that great character and privilege which he was pleased to vouchsafe, both to them and to all believers, in calling and accounting them his friends. It includes in it these following things :

1. Freedom of access. House and heart and all are open for the reception of a friend. The entrance is not beset with solemn excuses and lingering delays, but the passage is easy and free from all obstruction, and not only admits, but even invites the comer. How different, for the most part; is the same man from himself as he sustains the person of a magistrate, and as he sustains that of a friend ! As a magistrate or great officer he locks himself up from all approaches by the multiplied formalities of attendance, by the distance of ceremony and grandeur ; so many hungry officers to be passed through, so many thresholds to be saluted, so many days to be spent in waiting for an opportunity of perhaps but half an hour's converse.

But when he is to be entertained whose friendship, not whose business, demands an entrance, those formalities presently disappear, all impediments vanish, and the rigours of the magistrate submit to the endearments of a friend. He opens and yields himself to the man of business with difficulty and reluctance, but offers himself to the visits of a friend with facility, and all the meeting readiness of appetite and desire.

The reception of one is as different from the admission of the other as when the earth falls open under the incisions of the plough, and when it gapes and greedily opens itself to drink in the dew of heaven or the refreshments of a shower; or there is as much difference between them as when a man reaches out his arms to take up a burthen, and when he reaches them out to embrace.

It is confessed that the vast distance that sin had put between the offending creature and the offended Creator required the help of some great umpire and intercessor to open him a new way of access to God, and this Christ did for us as Mediator. But we read of no mediator to bring us to Christ: for though being God by nature, he dwells in the height of majesty and the inaccessible glories of a Deity, yet, to keep off all strangeness between himself and the sons of men, he has condescended to a consanguinity with us; he has clothed himself with flesh and blood, that so he might subdue his glories to a possibility of human converse. And, therefore, he that denies himself an immediate access to Christ, affronts him in the great relation of a friend, and as opening himself both to our persons and to our wants with the greatest tenderness and the freest invitation. There is none who acts a friend by a deputy, or can be familiar by proxy.

2. The second privilege of friendship is a favourable construction of all passages between friends that are not of so high and so malign a nature as to dis-

solve the relation. "Love covers a multitude of sins," says the apostle. When a scar cannot be taken away, the next kind office is to hide it. Love is never so blind as when it is to spy faults. It is like the painter, who, being to draw the picture of a friend having a blemish in one eye, would picture only the other side of his face. It is a noble and a great thing to cover the blemishes and to excuse the failings of a friend ; to draw a curtain before his stains, and to display his perfections ; to bury his weaknesses in silence, but to proclaim his virtues upon the house-top. It is an imitation of the charities of Heaven, which, when the creature lies prostrate in the weakness of sleep and weariness, spreads the covering of night and darkness over it to conceal it in that condition ; but as soon as our spirits are refreshed, and nature returns to its morning vigour, God then bids the sun rise, and the day shine upon us, both to advance and to show that activity.

It is the ennobling office of the understanding to correct the fallacious and mistaken reports of sense, and to assure us that the staff in the water is straight, though our eye would tell us it is crooked. So it is the excellency of friendship to rectify, or at least to qualify, the malignity of those surmises that would misrepresent a friend, and traduce him in our thoughts. Am I told that my friend has done me an injury, or that he has committed any indecent action? Why, the first debt that I both owe to his friendship, and

that he may challenge from mine, is rather to question the truth of the report than presently to believe my friend unworthy. Or if matter of fact breaks out and blazes with too great an evidence to be denied, or so much as doubted of, why still there are other lenitives that friendship will apply before it will be brought to the decretory rigours of a condemning sentence. A friend will be sure to act the part of an advocate before he will assume that of a judge. And there are few actions so ill, unless they are of a very deep and black tincture indeed, but will admit of some extenuation, at least, from those common topics of human frailty, such as are ignorance or inadvertency, passion or surprise, company or solicitation, with many other such things, which may go a great way towards an excusing of the agent, though they cannot absolutely justify the action. All which apologies for and alleviations of faults, though they are the heights of humanity, yet they are not the favours, but the duties of friendship. Charity itself commands us, where we know no ill, to think well of all ; but friendship, that always goes a pitch higher, gives a man a peculiar right and claim to the good opinion of his friend. And if we justly look upon a proneness to find faults as a very ill and a mean thing, we are to remember that a proneness to believe them is next to it.

We have seen here the demeanour of friendship between man and man ; but how is it, think we now, between Christ and the soul that depends upon him ?

Is he anyways short in these offices of tenderness and mitigation? No, assuredly, but by infinite degrees superior; for where our heart does but relent, his melts; where our eye pities, his bowels yearn. How many frowardnesses of ours does he smother, how many indignities does he pass by, and how many affronts does he put up at our hands, because his love is invincible, and his friendship unchangeable? He rates every action, every sinful infirmity, with the allowances of mercy, and never weighs the sin but together with it he weighs the force of the inducement, how much of it is to be attributed to choice, how much to the violence of the temptation, to the stratagem of the occasion, and the yielding frailties of weak nature.

Should we try men at that rate that we try Christ, we should quickly find that the largest stock of human friendship would be too little for us to spend long upon. But his compassion follows us with an infinite supply; he is God in his friendship as well as in his nature, and therefore we sinful creatures are not took upon advantages nor consumed in our provocations.

See this exemplified in his behaviour to his disciples while he was yet upon earth; how ready was he to excuse and cover their infirmities! At the last and bitterest scene of his life, when he was so full of agony and horror upon the approach of a dismal death, and so had most need of the refreshments of

society, and the friendly assistances of his disciples, and when also he desired no more of them, but only for awhile to sit up and pray with him. Yet they, like persons wholly untouched with his agonies, and unmoved with his passionate entreaties, forget both his and their own cares, and securely sleep away all concern for him or themselves either. Now what a fierce and sarcastic reprehension may we imagine this would have drawn from the friendships of the world, that act but to a human pitch ! And yet what a gentle one did it receive from Christ ! No more than, "What, could you not watch with me for one hour?"* And when from this admonition they took only occasion to redouble their fault, and to sleep again, so that, upon a second and third admonition, they had nothing to plead for their unseasonable drowsiness, yet then Christ, who was the only person concerned to have resented and aggravated this their unkindness, finds an extenuation for it when they themselves could not. "The spirit indeed is willing," says he, "but the flesh is weak." As if he had said, "I know your hearts, and am satisfied of your affection, and therefore accept your will, and compassionate your weakness." So benign, so gracious is the friendship of Christ ; so answerable to our wants, so suitable to their frailties. Happy that man who has a friend to point out to him the perfection of duty, and yet to pardon him in the lapses of his infirmity.

* Matt. xxvi. 40.

3. The third privilege of friendship is a sympathy in joy and grief. When a man shall have diffused his life, his self, and his whole concernments so far that he can weep his sorrows with another's eyes—when he has another heart besides his own, both to share and to support his griefs, and when, if his joys overflow, he can treasure up the overplus and redundancy of them in another breast, so that he can, as it were, shake off the solitude of a single nature, by dwelling in two bodies at once and living by another's breath—this surely is the height, the very spirit and perfection of all human felicities.

It is a true and happy observation of that great philosopher, the Lord Verulam, that this is the benefit of communication of our minds to others, "that sorrows by being communicated grow less, and joys greater." And, indeed, sorrow, like a stream, loses itself in many channels, and joy, like a ray of the sun, reflects with a greater ardour and quickness when it rebounds upon a man from the breast of his friend.

Now, friendship is the only scene upon which the glorious truth of this great proposition can be fully acted and drawn forth ; which, indeed, is a summary description of the sweets of friendship ; and the whole life of a friend, in the several parts and instances of it, is only a more diffuse comment upon, and a plainer explication of this Divine aphorism. Friendship never restrains a pleasure to a single fruition ; but such is the royal nature of this quality, that it still expresses

itself in the style of kings, as *we* do this or that ; and this is *our* happiness, and such or such a thing belongs to *us*, when the immediate possession of it is vested only in one. Nothing certainly in nature can so peculiarly gratify the noble dispositions of humanity as for one man to see another so much himself as to sigh his griefs and groan his pains, to sing his joys, and, as it were, to do and feel everything by sympathy and secret inexpressible communications. Thus it is upon a human account.

Let us now see how Christ sustains and makes good this generous quality of a friend ; and this we shall find fully set forth to us in Heb. iv. 15, where he is said to be a “merciful High Priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and that in all our afflictions he is afflicted.”* And no doubt, with the same bowels and meltings of affection with which any tender mother hears and bemoans the groanings of her sick child, does Christ hear and sympathise with the spiritual agonies of a soul under desertion, or the pressures of some stinging affliction. It is enough that he understands the exact measures of our strengths and weaknesses, that he knows our frame, and that he does not only know, but emphatically that he remembers also that we are but dust.† Observe that signal passage of his loving commiseration ; as soon as he had risen from the dead and met Mary Magdalen, he sends this message of his resur-

* Isa. lxiii. 9.

† Psal. ciii. 14.

rection by her : "Go, tell my disciples and Peter that I am risen."* What, was not Peter one of his disciples ? Why then is he mentioned particularly and by himself, as if he were exempted out of their number ? Why, we know into what a plunge he had newly cast himself by denying his Master, upon occasion of which he was now struggling with all the perplexities and horrors of mind imaginable, lest Christ might, in like manner, deny and disown him before his Father, and so repay one denial with another. Hereupon Christ particularly applies the comforts of his resurrection to him, as if he had said, "Tell all my disciples, but be sure especially to tell poor Peter, that I am risen from the dead, and that, notwithstanding his denial of me, the benefits of my resurrection belong to him as much as to any of the rest." This is the privilege of the saints, to have a companion and a supporter in all their miseries, in all the doubtful turnings and doleful passages of their lives ; in sum, this happiness does Christ vouchsafe to all his, that as a Saviour he once suffered for them, and that as a friend he always suffers with them.

4 The fourth privilege of friendship is that which is here specified in the text, a communication of secrets. A bosom secret and a bosom friend are usually put together. And this from Christ to the soul is not only kindness, but also honour and advancement ; it is for him to vouch it one of his privy

* Mark xvi. 7.

council. Nothing under a jewel is taken into the cabinet. A secret is the apple of our eye ; it will bear no touch nor approach ; we use to cover nothing but what we account a rarity. And therefore to communicate a secret to any one is to exalt him to one of the royalties of heaven ; for none knows the secrets of a man's mind but his God, his conscience, and his friend. Neither would any prudent man let such a thing go out of his own heart had he not another heart besides his own to receive it.

Now it was of old a privilege with which God was pleased to honour such as served him at the rate of an extraordinary obedience thus to admit them to a knowledge of many of his great counsels locked up from the rest of the world. When God had designed the destruction of Sodom, the Scripture represents him as unable to conceal that great purpose from Abraham, whom he always treated as his friend and acquaintance, that is, not only with love, but also with intimacy and familiarity. "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I go about to do?"* He thought it a violation of the rights of friendship to reserve his design wholly to himself. And St. James tells us that Abraham was called "the Friend of God,"† and therefore had a kind of claim to the knowledge of his secrets and the participation of his counsels. Also it is said of God that "he spoke to Moses as a man speaketh to his friend ;"‡ and that

* Gen. xviii. 17.

† James ii. 23.

‡ Exod. xxxiii. 11.

not only for the familiarity and facility of address, but also for the peculiar communications of his mind. Moses was with him in the retirements of the Mount, received there his dictates and his private instructions, as his deputy and viceroy ; and when the multitude and congregation of Israel were thundered away and kept off from any approach to it, he was honoured with an intimate and immediate admission. The priests, indeed, were taken into a near attendance upon God ; but still there was a degree of a nearer converse, and the interest of a friend was above the privileges of the highest servant. "Thou shalt come up," says God, "thou, and Aaron with thee : but let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the Lord, lest the Lord break forth upon them."* And if we proceed further we shall still find a continuation of the same privilege. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him."† Nothing is to be concealed from the other self. To be a friend and to be conscious are terms equivalent.

Now if God maintained such intimacies with those whom he loved under the law (which was a dispensation of greater distance), we may be sure that under the gospel, the very nature of which imports condescension and compliance, there must needs be the same, with much greater advantage. And, therefore, when God had manifested himself in the flesh, how sacredly did he preserve this privilege ? how freely

* Exod. xix. 24.

† Psal. xxv. 14.

did Christ unbosom himself to his disciples? "Unto you," says he, "it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but unto others in parables; that seeing they might not see."* Such shall be permitted to cast an eye into the ark, and to look into the very holy of holies. And, again: "Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."† Neither did he treat them with these peculiarities of favour in the extraordinary discoveries of the gospel only, but also of those incommunicable revelations of the Divine love in reference to their own personal interest in it. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."‡ Assurance is a rarity covered from the inspection of the world, a secret that none can know but God and the person that is blessed with it; it is written in a private character, not to be read nor understood but by the conscience, to which the Spirit of God has vouchsafed to decipher it. Every believer lives upon an inward provision of comfort that the world is a stranger to.

5. The fifth advantage of friendship is counsel and advice. A man will sometimes need not only another heart, but also another head besides his own. In

* Luke viii. 10. † Matt. xiii. 17. ‡ Rev. ii. 17.

solitude there is not only discomfort, but weakness also ; and that saying of the wise man, “ Woe to him that is alone,”* is verified upon none so much as upon the friendless person. When a man shall be perplexed with knots and problems of business and contrary affairs, where the determination is dubious, and both parts of the contrariety seem equally weighty, so that which way soever the choice determines, a man is sure to venture a great concern, how happy then is it to fetch in aid from another person, whose judgment may be greater than my own, and whose concernment is sure not to be less ! There are some passages of a man’s affairs that would quite break a single understanding ; so many intricacies, so many labyrinths, are there in them, that the succours of reason fail, the very force and spirit of it being lost in an actual intention scattered upon several clashing objects at once ; in which case the interposal of a friend is like the supply of a fresh party to a besieged yielding city.

Now Christ is not failing in this office of a friend also ; for in that illustrious prediction of Isaiah, amongst the rest of his great titles, he is called Mighty Counsellor,† and his counsel is not only sure, but also free. It is not under the gospel of Christ, as under some laws of men, where you must be forced to buy your counsel and oftentimes pay dear for bad advice ; no, he is a light to those that sit in darkness,

* Eccles. iv. 10.

† Isa. ix. 6.

and no man sees the sun, no man purchases the light, nor errs if he walks by it. The only price that Christ sets upon his counsel is that we follow it, and that we do that which is best for us to do. He is not only light for us to see by, but also light for us to see with; he is understanding to the ignorant and eyes to the blind; and whosoever has both a faithful and a discreet friend to guide him in the dark, slippery, and dangerous passages of his life, may carry his eyes in another man's head, and yet see never the worse. The apostle tells us that Christ is made to us not only sanctification and redemption, but wisdom too;* we are his members, and it is but natural that all the members of the body should be guided by the wisdom of the head. And therefore let every believer comfort himself in this high privilege, that in the great things that concern his eternal peace, he is not left to stand or fall by the uncertain directions of his own judgment. Sad were his condition if he should be so, when he is to encounter an enemy made up of wiles and stratagems, an old serpent, and a long experienced deceiver, and successful at the trade for some thousands of years. The inequality of the match between such an one and the subtlest of us would quickly appear by a fatal circumvention; there must be a wisdom from above to overreach and master this hellish wisdom from beneath; and this every sanctified person is sure

* 1 Cor. i. 30.

of in his great Friend, in whom all the treasures of wisdom dwell; treasures that flow out and are imparted freely, both in direction and assistance, to all that belong to him. He never leaves any of his perplexed, amazed, or bewildered, where the welfare of their souls requires a better judgment than their own, either to guide them in their duty or to disentangle them from a temptation. Whosoever has Christ for his friend shall be sure of counsel, and whosoever is his own friend will be sure to obey it.

6. The last and crowning privilege, or rather property of friendship, is constancy. He only is a friend whose friendship lives as long as himself, and who ceases to love and to breathe at the same instant. Not that I yet state constancy in such an absurd, senseless, and irrational continuance in friendship as no injuries or provocations whatsoever can break off; for there are some injuries that extinguish the very relation between friends, in which case a man ceases to be a friend, not from any inconstancy in his friendship, but from defect of an object for his friendship to exert itself upon. It is one thing for the father to cease to be a father by casting off his son, and another for him to cease to be so by the death of his son. In this the relation is at an end for want of a correlate. So in friendship, there are some passages of that high and hostile nature that they really and properly constitute and denominate the person guilty of them an enemy; and if so, how can the other

person possibly continue a friend, since friendship essentially requires that it be between two at least? There can be no friendship where there are not two friends.

Nobody is bound to look upon his backbiter or his underminer, his betrayer or his oppressor, as his friend; nor indeed is it possible that he should do so, unless he could alter the constitution and order of things, and establish a new nature and a new morality in the world; for to remain insensible of such provocations is not constancy but apathy, and therefore they discharge the person so treated from the proper obligations of a friend, though Christianity, I confess, binds him to the duties of a neighbour.

But to give you the true nature and measures of constancy: it is such a stability and firmness of friendship as overlooks and passes by all those lesser failures of kindness and respect, that, partly through passion, partly through indiscretion, and such other frailties incident to human nature, a man may be sometimes guilty of, and yet still retain the same habitual goodwill and prevailing propensity of mind to his friend that he had before. And whose friendship soever is of that strength and duration as to stand its ground against and remain unshaken by such assaults (which yet are strong enough to shake down and annihilate the friendship of little puny minds), such an one, I say, has reached all the true measures of constancy; his friendship is of a noble make and a

lasting consistency ; it resembles marble, and deserves to be wrote upon it.

But how few tempers in the world are of that magnanimous frame as to reach the heights of so great a virtue. Many offer at the effects of friendship, but they do not last ; they are promising in the beginning, but they fail, and jade, and tire in the prosecution. For most people in the world are acted by levity and humour, by strange and irrational changes. And how often may we meet with those who are one while courteous, civil, and obliging, at least to their proportion, but within a small time after are so supercilious, sharp, troublesome, fierce, and exceptionous, that they are not only short of the true character of friendship, but become the very sores and burthens of society ? Such low, such worthless dispositions, how easily are they discovered, how justly are they despised ! But now that we may pass from one contrary to another, Christ, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, in his being, is so also in his affection. He is not of the number or nature of those pitiful, mean pretenders to friendship, who perhaps will love and smile upon you one day, and not so much as know you the next ; many of which sort there are in the world, who are not so much courted outwardly, but that inwardly they are detested much more.

Friendship is a kind of covenant, and most covenants run upon mutual terms and conditions ; and,

therefore, so long as we are exact in fulfilling the conditions on our parts, I mean, exact according to the measures of sincerity, though not of perfection, we may be sure that Christ will not fail in the least iota to fulfil everything on his. The favour of relations, patrons, and princes is uncertain, ticklish, and variable, and the friendship which they take up upon the accounts of judgment and merit they most times lay down out of humour. But the friendship of Christ has none of these weaknesses, no such hollowness or unsoundness in it. For neither principalities nor powers, things present nor things to come, no, nor all the rage and malice of hell, shall be able to pluck the meanest of Christ's friends out of his bosom ; for, whom he loves, he loves to the end.

Now, from the particulars hitherto discoursed of, we may infer and learn these two things :

1. The excellency and value of friendship, Christ, the Son of the most High God, the second person in the glorious Trinity, took upon him our nature that he might give a great instance and example of this virtue, and condescended to be a man only that he might be a friend. Our Creator, our Lord and King, he was before, but he would needs come down from all this, and in a sort become our equal, that he might partake of that noble quality that is properly between equals. Christ took not upon him flesh and blood that he might conquer and rule nations, lead armies,

or possess palaces, but that he might have the relenting, the tenderness, and the compassions of human nature, which render it properly capable of friendship, and, in a word, that he might have our heart and we have his. God himself sets friendship above all considerations of kindred or consanguinity as the greatest ground and argument of mutual endearment. "If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee to go and serve other gods, thou shalt not consent unto him."* The emphasis of the expression is very remarkable, it being a gradation or ascent, by several degrees of dearness, to that which is the highest of all. Neither wife nor brother, son nor daughter, though the nearest in cognation, are allowed to stand in competition with a friend, who, if he fully answers the duties of that great relation, is indeed better and more valuable than all of them put together, and may serve instead of them; so that he who has a firm, a worthy, and sincere friend, may want all the rest without missing them. That which lies in a man's bosom should be dear to him, but that which lies within his heart ought to be much dearer.

2. In the next place we learn from hence the high advantage of being truly pious and religious. When we have said and done all, it is only the true Christian and the religious person who is or can be sure of

* Deut. xiii. 6-8.

a friend ; sure of obtaining, sure of keeping him. But as for the friendship of the world, when a man shall have done all that he can to make one his friend, employed the utmost of his wit and labour, beaten his brains and emptied his purse to create an endearment between him and the person whose friendship he desires, he may in the end, upon all these endeavours and attempts, be forced to write vanity and frustration ; for by them all he may at last be no more able to get into the other's heart than he is to thrust his hand into a pillar of brass—the man's affection, amidst all these kindnesses done him, remaining wholly unconcerned and impregnable ; just like a rock, which being plied continually by the waves, still throws them back again into the bosom of the sea that sent them, but is not at all moved by any of them.

People at first, while they are young and raw, and soft natured, are apt to think it an easy thing to gain love, and reckon their own friendship a sure price of another man's. But when experience shall have once opened their eyes and shown them the hardness of most hearts, the hollowness of others, and the baseness and ingratitude of almost all, they will then find that a friend is the gift of God, and that He only who made hearts can unite them. For it is he who creates those sympathies and suitablenesses of nature that are the foundation of all true friendship, and then by his providence brings persons so affected together.

It is an expression frequent in Scripture, but infinitely more significant than at first it is usually observed to be, namely, that God gave such or such a person grace or favour in another's eyes. As, for instance, it is said of Joseph, that "the Lord was with him, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison."* Still it is an invisible hand from heaven that ties this knot, and mingles hearts and souls by strange, secret, and unaccountable conjunctions.

That heart shall surrender itself and its friendship to one man at first view, which another has in vain been laying siege to for many years by all the repeated acts of kindness imaginable.

Nay, so far is friendship from being of any human production, that unless nature be predisposed to it by its own propensity or inclination, no arts of obligation shall be able to abate the secret hatreds and hostilities of some persons towards others. No friendly offices, no addresses, no benefits whatsoever, shall ever alter or allay that diabolical rancour that frets and ferments in some hellish breast, but that upon all occasions it will foam out at its foul mouth in slander and invective, and sometimes bite too in a shrewd turn or a secret blow. This is true and undeniable upon frequent experience, and happy those who can learn it at the cost of other men's.

But now, on the contrary, he who will give up his

* Gen. xxxix. 21.

name to Christ in faith unfeigned, and a sincere obedience to all his righteous laws, shall be sure to find love for love, and friendship for friendship. The success is certain and infallible, and none ever yet miscarried in the attempt : for Christ freely offers his friendship to all, and sets no other rate upon so vast a purchase, but only that we should suffer him to be our friend. Thou perhaps spendest thy precious time in waiting upon such a great one, and thy estate in presenting him ; and, probably, after all hast no other reward but sometimes to be smiled upon, and always to be smiled at ; and when thy greatest and most pressing occasions shall call for succour and relief, then to be deserted and cast off, and not known.

Now, I say, turn the stream of thy endeavours another way, and bestow but half that hearty, sedulous attendance upon thy Saviour in the duties of prayer and mortification, and be at half that expense in charitable works by relieving Christ in his poor members ; and, in a word, study as much to please Him who died for thee, as thou dost to court and humour thy great patron, who cares not for thee, and thou shalt make him thy Friend for ever—a Friend who shall own thee in thy lowest condition, speak comfort to thee in all thy sorrows, counsel thee in all thy doubts, answer all thy wants, and, in a word, never leave thee nor forsake thee. But when all the hopes that thou hast raised upon the promises or supposed kindnesses of the fastidious and fallacious great ones

of the world shall fail and upbraid thee to thy face, he shall then take thee into his bosom, embrace, cherish, and support thee ; and, as the psalmist expresses it, “ He shall guide thee with his counsel here, and afterwards receive thee into glory.”

THE PRACTICE OF RELIGION ENFORCED BY REASON.

A SERMON PREACHED AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY, 1667.

He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely.—Proverbs x. 9.

AS it were easy to evince, both from reason and experience, that there is a strange, restless activity in the soul of man, continually disposing it to operate and exert its faculties, so the phrase of Scripture still expresses the life of man by walking, that is, it represents an active principle in an active posture. And because the nature of man carries him out thus to action, it is no wonder if the same nature equally renders him solicitous about the issue and event of his actions; for every one reflecting upon the way and method of his own workings, will find that he is still determined in them by a respect to the consequence of what he does, always proceeding upon this argumentation, if I do such a thing such an advantage will follow from it, and therefore I will do it. And if

I do this, such a mischief will ensue thereupon, and therefore I will forbear. Every one, I say, is concluded by this practical discourse, and for a man to bring his actions to the event proposed and designed by him, is to walk surely.

But since the event of an action usually follows the nature or quality of it, and the quality follows the rule directing it, it concerns a man by all means in the framing of his actions not to be deceived in the rule which he proposes for the measure of them, which, without great and exact caution, he may be these two ways : either by laying false and deceitful principles ; or, in case he lays right principles, yet by mistaking in the consequences which he draws from them—an error in either of which is equally dangerous ; for if a man is to draw a line, it is all one whether he does it by a crooked rule or by a straight one misapplied. He who fixes upon false principles treads upon infirm ground and so sinks ; and he who fails in his deductions from right principles, stumbles upon firm ground and so falls ; the disaster is not of the same kind, but of the same mischief in both.

It must be confessed that it is sometimes very hard to judge of the truth or goodness of principles considered barely in themselves and abstracted from their consequences. But certainly he acts upon the surest and most prudential grounds in the world, who, whether the principles which he acts upon prove true or false, yet secures a happy issue to his actions.

Now, he who guides his actions by the rules of piety and religion, lays these two principles as the great ground of all that he does.

First, That there is an infinite, eternal, all-wise mind governing the affairs of the world, and taking such an account of the actions of men as, according to the quality of them, to punish or reward them.

Second, That there is an estate of happiness or misery after this life allotted to every man, according to the quality of his actions here. These, I say, are the principles which every religious man proposes to himself, and the deduction which he makes from them is this, that it is his grand interest and concern so to act and behave himself in this world, as to secure himself from an estate of misery in the other. And thus to act is, in the phrase of Scripture, to walk uprightly; and it is my business to prove, that he who acts in the strength of this conclusion, drawn from the two forementioned principles, walks surely, or secures a happy event to his actions against all contingencies whatsoever.

And to demonstrate this, I shall consider the said principles under a threefold supposition.

I. As certainly true.

II. As probable.

III. As false.

And if the pious man brings his actions to a happy end, which soever of these suppositions his principles fall under, then, certainly, there is none who walks so

surely, and upon such irrefragable grounds of prudence, as he who is religious.

I. First of all, therefore, we will take these principles, as we may very well do, under the hypothesis of *certainly true*; where, though the method of the ratiocination which I have cast the present discourse into, does not naturally engage me to prove them so, but only to show what directly and necessarily follows upon a supposal that they are so; yet to give the greater perspicuity and clearness to the prosecution of the subject in hand, I shall briefly demonstrate them thus.

It is necessary that there should be some first mover, and if so, a first being. And the first being must infer an infinite, unlimited perfection in the said being. For if it were finite or limited, that limitation must have been either from itself or from something else. But not from itself, since it is contrary to reason and nature that any being should limit its own perfection; nor yet from something else, since then it should not have the first, as supposing some other thing coevous to it, which is against the present supposition. So that it being clear that there must be a first being, and that infinitely perfect, it will follow that all other perfection that is must be derived from it, and so we infer the creation of the world. Then supposing the world created by God (since it is no ways reconcileable to God's wisdom that he should

not also govern it), creation must needs infer providence. And then it being granted that God governs the world, it will follow also that he does it by means suitable to the natures of the thing he governs, and to the attainment of the proper ends of government.

Moreover, man being by nature a free moral agent, and so capable of deviating from his duty as well as performing it, it is necessary that he should be governed by laws. And since laws require that they be enforced with the sanction of rewards and punishments sufficient to sway and work upon the minds of such as are to be governed by them, and since experience shows that rewards and punishments, terminated only within this life, are not sufficient for that purpose, it fairly and rationally follows that the rewards and punishments which God governs mankind by, do and must look beyond it.

And thus I have given a brief proof of the certainty of these principles, namely, that there is a supreme Governor of the world, and that there is a future estate of happiness or misery for men after this life ; which principles, while a man steers his course by, if he acts piously, soberly, and temperately, I suppose there needs no further argument to evince that he acts prudentially and safely, for he acts as under the eye of his just and severe Judge, who reaches to his creature a command with one hand and a reward with the other. He spends as a person who knows that he must come to a reckoning. He sees an eter-

nal happiness or misery suspended upon a few days' behaviour, and therefore he lives every hour as for eternity. His future condition has such a powerful influence upon his present practice, because he entertains a continual apprehension and a firm persuasion of it. If a man walks over a narrow bridge when he is drunk, it is no wonder that he forgets his caution while he overlooks his danger ; but he who is sober and views that nice separation between himself and the devouring deep, so that if he should slip he sees his grave gaping under him, surely must needs take every step with horror and the utmost caution and solicitude.

But for a man to believe it as the most undoubted certainty in the world that he shall be judged according to the quality of his actions here, and after judgment receive an eternal recompence, and yet to take his full swing in all the pleasures of sin, is it not a greater frenzy than for a man to take a purse at Tyburn while he is actually seeing another hanged for the same fact ? It is really to dare and defy the justice of Heaven, to laugh at the right-aiming thunderbolts, to puff at damnation, and, in a word, to bid Omnipotence do its worst. He, indeed, who thus walks, walks surely, but it is because he is sure to be damned.

I confess it is hard to reconcile such a stupid course to the natural way of the soul's acting, according to which the will moves according to the proposals of

good and evil made by the understanding. And, therefore, for a man to run headlong into the bottomless pit, while the eye of a seeing conscience assures him that it is bottomless and open, and all return from it desperate and impossible, while his ruin stares him in the face, and the sword of vengeance points directly at his heart, still to press on to the embraces of his sin, is a problem unresolvable upon any other ground but that sin infatuates before it destroys. For Judas to receive and swallow the sop when his Master gave it him seasoned with those terrible words, "It had been good for that man that he had never been born," surely this argued a furious appetite, and a strong stomach, that could thus catch at a morsel with the fire and brimstone all flaming about it, and, as it were, digest death itself, and make a meal upon perdition.

I could wish that every bold sinner, when he is about to engage in the commission of any known sin, would arrest his confidence, and for awhile stop the execution of his purpose, with this short question, "Do I believe that it is really true that God has denounced death to such a practice, or do I not?" If he does not, let him renounce his Christianity. But if he does believe it, how will he acquit himself upon the accounts of bare reason? For, does he think that if he pursues the means of death they will not bring him to that fatal end? Or does he think that he can grapple with Divine vengeance, and endure the ever-

lasting burnings, or arm himself against the bites of the never-dying worm? No, surely, these are things not to be imagined, and therefore I cannot conceive what security the presuming sinner can promise himself but upon these two following accounts :

I. That God is merciful, and will not be so severe as his word ; and that his threatenings of eternal torments are not so decretory and absolute, but that there is a very comfortable latitude left in them for men of skill to creep out at. And here, it must indeed be confessed, that Origen, and some others not long since, who have been so officious as to furbish up and reprint his old errors, hold that the sufferings of the damned are not to be, in a strict sense, eternal ; but that, after a certain revolution and period of time, there shall be a general gaol delivery of the souls in prison, and that not for a further execution, but a final release. And it must be further acknowledged, that some of the ancients, like kind-hearted men, have talked much of annual refrigeriums, respites, or intervals of punishment to the damned, as particularly on the great festivals of the Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost, and the like ; in which, as these good men are more to be commended for their kindness and compassion than to be followed in their opinion, which may be much better argued by wishes than demonstrations, so, admitting that it were true, yet what a pitiful, slender comfort would this amount to? Much like the Jews abating the punishment of male-

factors from forty stripes to forty save one. A great indulgence indeed, even as great as the difference between forty and thirty-nine; and yet much less considerable would that indulgence be of a few holidays in the measures of eternity, of some hours' ease, compared with infinite ages of torment.

Supposing, therefore, that few sinners relieve themselves with such groundless, trifling considerations as these, yet may they not, however, fasten a rational hope upon the boundless mercy of God that this may induce him to spare his poor creature, though by sin become obnoxious to his wrath? To this I answer, that the Divine mercy is indeed large and far surpassing all created measures, yet, nevertheless, it has its proper time, and after this life it is the time of justice, and to hope for the favours of mercy then, is to expect a harvest in the dead of winter. God has cast all his works into a certain inviolable order, according to which there is a time to pardon and a time to punish, and the time of one is not the time of the other. When the corn has once felt the sickle, it has no more benefit from the sunshine. But,

2. If the conscience be too apprehensive (as for the most part it is) to venture the final issue of things, upon a fond persuasion that the great Judge of the world will relent and not execute the sentence pronounced by him; as if he had threatened men with hell, rather to fright them from sin, than with an intent to punish them for it; I say, if the conscience cannot find any

satisfaction or support from such reasonings as these, yet may it not, at least, relieve itself with the purposes of a future repentance, notwithstanding its present actual violations of the law? I answer, that this certainly is a confidence of all others the most ungrounded and irrational. For upon what ground can a man promise himself a future repentance who cannot promise himself a futurity—whose life depends upon his breath, and is so restrained to the present that it cannot secure to itself the reversion of the very next minute? Have not many died with the guilt of impenitence and the designs of repentance together? If a man dies to-day by the prevalence of some ill humours, will it avail him that he intended to have bled and purged to-morrow?

But how dares sinful dust and ashes invade the prerogative of Providence, and carve out to himself the seasons and issues of life and death, which the Father keeps wholly within his own power? How does that man who thinks he sins securely under the shelter of some remote purposes of amendment know but that the decree above may be already passed against him, and his allowance of mercy spent, so that the bow in the clouds is now drawn, and the arrow levelled at his head, and not many days like to pass but perhaps an apoplexy, or an imposthume, or some sudden disaster, may stop his breath, and reap him down as a sinner ripe for destruction?

I conclude, therefore, that upon supposition of the

certain truth of the principles of religion, he who walks not uprightly, has neither from the presumption of God's mercy reversing the decree of his justice, nor from his own purposes of a future repentance, any sure ground to put his foot upon ; but in this whole course acts as directly in contradiction to nature as he does in defiance of grace. In a word, he is besotted, and has lost his reason, and what then can there be for religion to take hold of him by ?

Come we now to the

II. supposition, under which we show that the principles of religion laid down by us might be considered, and that is as *only probable*. Where we must observe that probability does not properly make any alteration, either in the truth or falsity of things, but only imports a different degree of their clearness or appearance to the understanding. So that that is to be accounted probable which has more and better arguments producible for it than can be brought against it, and surely such a thing, at least, is religion. For certain it is that religion is universal, I mean the first rudiments and general notions of religion, called natural religion, and consisting in the acknowledgment of a Deity and of the common principles of morality, and a future estate of souls after death, in which also we have all that some reformers and refiners amongst us would reduce Christianity itself to. This notion of religion, I say, has diffused itself

in some degree or other, greater or less, as far as human nature extends ; so that there is no nation in the world, though plunged into never such gross and absurd idolatry, but has some awful sense of a Deity, and a persuasion of a state of retribution to men after this life.

But now, if there are really no such things, but all is a mere lie and a fable contrived only to chain up the liberty of man's nature from a freer enjoyment of those things which otherwise it would have as full a right to enjoy as to breathe, I demand whence this persuasion could thus come to be universal ? For was it ever known in any other instance that the whole world was brought to conspire in the belief of a lie ? Nay, and of such a lie as should lay upon men such unpleasing abridgments, tying them up from a full gratification of those lusts and appetites which they so impatiently desire to satisfy, and, consequently, by all means to remove those impediments that might any way obstruct their satisfaction.

Since therefore it cannot be made out upon any principle of reason how all the nations in the world, otherwise so distant in situation, manners, interests, and inclinations, should, by design or combination, meet in one persuasion ; and withal, that men who so mortally hate to be deceived and imposed upon, should yet suffer themselves to be deceived by such a persuasion as is false, and not only false but also cross and contrary to their strongest desires ; so that if it

were false, they would set the utmost force of their reason on work to discover that falsity, and thereby disenthral themselves ; and further, since there is nothing false but what may be proved to be so. And yet, lastly, since all the power and industry of man's mind has not been hitherto able to prove a falsity in the principles of religion, it irrefragably follows that religion is, at least, a very high probability.

And this is that which I here contend for, that it is not necessary to the obliging men to believe religion to be true, that this truth be made out to their reason by arguments demonstratively certain, but that it is sufficient to render their unbelief inexcusable, even upon the account of bare reason, if so be the truth of religion carry in it a much greater probability than any of those ratiocinations that pretend the contrary ; and this I prove in the strength of these two considerations.

I. That no man, in matters of this life, requires an assurance either of the good which he designs or the evil which he avoids, from arguments demonstratively certain, but judges himself to have sufficient ground to act upon from a probable persuasion of the event of things. No man who first traffics into a foreign country, has any scientific evidence that there is such a country but by report, which can produce no more than a moral certainty ; that is, a very high probability, and such as there can be no reason to except against. He who has a probable belief that

he shall meet with thieves in such a road, thinks himself to have reason enough to decline it, albeit he is sure to sustain some inconvenience by his so doing.

But perhaps it may be replied (and it is all that can be replied), that a greater assurance and evidence is required of the things and concerns of the other world than of the interests of this. To which I answer, that assurance and evidence* have no place at all here, as being contrary to our present supposition ; according to which, we are now treating of the practical principles of religion only as probable, and falling under a probable persuasion. And for this I affirm, that where the case is about the hazarding an eternal or a temporal concern, a less degree of probability ought to engage our caution against the loss of the former, than is necessary to engage it about preventing the loss of the latter ; forasmuch as where things are least to be put to the venture, as the eternal interests of the other world ought to be, there every, even the least probability or likelihood of danger should be provided against ; but where the loss can be but temporal, every small probability of it need not put us so anxiously to prevent it, since, though it should happen, the loss might be repaired again, or, if not, could not however destroy us by reaching us in our greatest and highest concern, which no temporal thing

* Terms, by the way, extremely different ; the first, respecting properly the ground of our assenting to a thing ; and the other, the clearness of the thing or object assented to.

whatsoever is or can be. And this directly introduces the

2. Consideration, viz., that bare reason, discoursing upon a principle of self-preservation, which surely is the fundamental principle which nature proceeds by, will oblige a man voluntarily, and by choice, to undergo any less evil to secure himself but from the probability of an evil incomparably greater, and that also such an one as, if that probability passes into a certain event, admits of no reparation by any after remedy that can be applied to it.

Now, that religion teaching a future estate of souls is a probability, and that its contrary cannot with equal probability be proved, we have already evinced. This therefore being supposed, we will suppose yet further, that for a man to abridge himself in the full satisfaction of his appetites and inclinations is an evil because a present pain and trouble ; but then it must likewise be granted that nature must needs abhor a state of eternal pain and misery much more, and that if a man does not undergo the former less evil, it is highly probable that such an eternal estate of misery will be his portion ; and if so, I would fain know whether that man takes a rational course to preserve himself who refuses the endurance of these lesser troubles to secure himself from a condition infinitely and inconceivably more miserable.

But since probability, in the nature of it, supposes that a thing may or may not be so for anything that

yet appears, or is certainly determined on either side, we will here consider both sides of this probability, as,

i. That it is one way possible that there may be no such thing as a future estate of happiness or misery for those who have lived well or ill here ; and then he who, upon the strength of a contrary belief, abridged himself in the gratification of his appetites, sustains only this evil, viz., that he did not please his senses and unbounded desires so much as otherwise he might and would have done, had he not lived under the captivity and check of such a belief. This is the utmost which he suffers, but whether this be a real evil or no, whatsoever vulgar minds may commonly think it, shall be discoursed of afterwards.

ii. But then, again, on the other side, it is probable that there will be such a future estate ; and then how miserably is the voluptuous, sensual unbeliever left in the lurch ? For there can be no retreat for him then, no mending of his choice in the other world, no after game to be played in hell. It fares with men, in reference to their future estate and the condition upon which they must pass to it, much as it does with a merchant having a vessel richly fraught at sea in a storm ; the storm grows higher and higher, and threatens the utter loss of the ship. But there is one, and but one, certain way to save it, which is by throwing its rich lading overboard ; yet still for all this the man knows not but possibly the storm may cease, and so all be preserved. However, in the meantime there is little

or no probability that it will do so ; and in case it should not, he is then assured that he must lay his life as well as his rich commodities in the cruel deep. Now, in this case, would this man, think we, act rationally, should he, upon the slender possibility of escaping otherwise, neglect the sure infallible preservation of his life by casting away his rich goods ? No, certainly ; it would be so far from it, that should the storm by a strange hap cease immediately after he had thus thrown away his riches, yet the throwing them away was infinitely more rational and eligible than the retaining or keeping them could have been.

For a man, while he lives here in the world, to doubt whether there be any hell or no, and thereupon to live as if, absolutely, there were none, but when he dies to find himself confuted in the flames, this, surely, must be the height of woe and disappointment, and a bitter conviction of an irrational venture and an absurd choice. In doubtful cases reason still determines for the safer side, especially if the case be not only doubtful, but also highly concerning, and the venture be of a soul and an eternity.

He who sat at a table, richly and deliciously furnished, but with a sword hanging over his head by one single thread or hair, surely had enough to check his appetite, even against all the ragings of hunger and temptations of sensuality. The only argument that could any way encourage his appetite, was, that possibly the sword might not fall. But when his

reason encountered it with another question, *What if it should fall?* and that pitiful stay by which it hung opposed the likelihood that it would to a mere possibility that it might not, what could the man enjoy or taste of his rich banquet with all this doubt and horror working in his mind?

Though a man's condition should be really in itself never so safe, yet an apprehension and surmise that it is not safe, is enough to make a quick and a tender reason sufficiently miserable. Let the most acute and learned unbeliever demonstrate that there is no hell, and, if he can, he sins so much the more rationally; otherwise, if he cannot, the case remains doubtful at least. But he who sins obstinately does not act as if it were so much as doubtful; for if it were certain and evident to sense, he could do no more; but for a man to found a confident practice upon a disputable principle, is brutishly to outrun his reason, and to build ten times wider than his foundation. In a word, I look upon this one short consideration, were there no more, as a sufficient ground for any rational man to take up his religion upon, and which I defy the subtlest atheist in the world solidly to answer or confute, namely, that it is good to be sure.

And so I proceed to the

III. and last supposition, under which the principles of religion may, for argument's sake, be considered, and that is, as *false*—which surely must reach

the utmost thoughts of any atheist whatsoever Nevertheless, even upon this account also, I doubt not but to evince, that he who walks uprightly, walks much more surely than the wicked and profane liver, and that with reference to the most valued temporal enjoyments, such as are reputation, quietness, health, and the like, which are the greatest which this life affords or is desirable for. And,

1. For reputation or credit. Is any one had in greater esteem than the just person who has given the world an assurance, by the constant tenor of his practice, that he makes a conscience of his ways, that he scorns to do an unworthy or a base thing, to lie, to defraud, to undermine another's interest by any sinister and inferior arts? And is there anything which reflects a greater lustre upon a man's person than a severe temperance and a restraint of himself from vicious and unlawful pleasures? Does anything shine so bright as virtue, and that even in the eyes of those who are void of it? For hardly shall you find any one so bad but he desires the credit of being thought what his vice will not let him be; so great a pleasure and convenience is it to live with honour and a fair acceptance amongst those whom we converse with; and a being without it is not life, but rather the skeleton or *caput mortuum* of life; like time without day, or day itself without the shining of the sun to enliven it.

On the other side, is there anything that more

embitters all the enjoyments of this life than shame and reproach? Yet this is generally the lot and portion of the impious and irreligious, and of some of them more especially.

For how infamous, in the first place, is the false, fraudulent, and unconscionable person, and how quickly is his character known? For hardly ever did any man of no conscience continue a man of any credit long. Likewise, how odious, as well as infamous, is such an one, especially if he be arrived at that consummate and robust degree of falsehood as to play in and out, and show tricks with oaths, the sacredest bonds which the conscience of man can be bound with—how is such an one shunned and dreaded, like a walking pest? What volleys of scoffs, curses, and sàtires are discharged at him? So that, let never so much honour be placed upon him, it cleaves not to him, but forthwith ceases to be honour by being so placed; no preferment can sweeten him, but the higher he stands the further and wider he stinks.

In like manner for the drinker and debauched person: is anything more the object of scorn and contempt than such an one? His company is justly looked upon as a disgrace, and nobody can own a friendship for him without being an enemy to himself. A drunkard is, as it were, outlawed from all worthy and creditable converse; men abhor, loath, and despise him.

But not to go over all the several kinds of vice and

wickedness, should we set aside the consideration of the glories of a better world, and allow this life for the only place and scene of man's happiness? Yet surely Cato will be always more honourable than Clodius, and Cicero than Catiline. Fidelity, justice, and temperance will always draw their own reward after them, or rather carry it with them, in those marks of honour which they fix upon the persons who practise and pursue them. It is said of David, that "he died full of days, riches, and honour,"* and there was no need of a heaven to render him in all respects a much happier man than Saul. But,

2. The virtuous and religious person walks upon surer grounds than the vicious and irreligious, in respect of the ease, peace, and quietness which he enjoys in this world, and which certainly make no small part of human felicity; for anxiety and labour are great ingredients of that curse which sin has entailed upon fallen man. Care and toil came into the world with sin, and remain ever since inseparable from it, both as its punishment and effect.

The service of sin is perfect slavery, and he who will pay obedience to the commands of it, shall find it an unreasonable taskmaster and an unmeasurable exactor.

And to represent the case in some particulars, the ambitious person must rise early, and sit up late, and pursue his design with a constant, indefatigable attend-

* 1 Chron. xxix. 28.

ance ; he must be infinitely patient and servile, and obnoxious to all the cross humours of those whom he expects to rise by ; he must endure and digest all sorts of affronts, adore the foot that kicks him, and kiss the hand that strikes him ; while, in the meantime, the humble and contented man is virtuous at a much easier rate ; his virtue bids him sleep and take his rest, while the other's restless sin bids him sit up and watch. He pleases himself innocently and easily, while the ambitious man attempts to please others sinfully and with difficulty, and perhaps, in the issue, unsuccessfully too.

The robber and man of rapine must run, and ride, and use all the dangerous, and even desperate ways of escape ; and, probably, after all, his sin betrays him to a gaol, and from thence advances him to the gibbet. But let him carry off his booty with as much safety and success as he can wish, yet the innocent person with never so little of his own envies him not, and, if he has nothing, fears him not.

Likewise the cheat and fraudulent person is put to a thousand shifts to palliate his fraud, and to be thought an honest man. But surely there can be no greater labour than to be always dissembling and forced to maintain a constant disguise, there being so many ways by which a smothered truth is apt to blaze and break out ; the very nature of things making it not more natural for them to be, than to appear as they be. But he who will be really honest, just, and

sincere in his dealings, needs take no pains to be thought so ; no more than the sun needs take any pains to shine, or, when he is up, to convince the world that it is day.

And here, again, to bring in the man of luxury and intemperance for his share in the pain and trouble, as well as in the forementioned shame and infamy of his vice ; can any toil or day-labour equal the fatigue or drudgery which such an one undergoes, while he is continually pouring in draught after draught, and cramming in morsel after morsel, and that in spite of appetite and nature, till he becomes a burden to the very earth that bears him, but, if possible, greater to himself?

* * * * *

3. The religious person walks upon surer grounds than the irreligious, in respect of the very health of his body. Virtue is a friend and a help to nature, but it is vice and luxury that destroy it, and the diseases of intemperance are the natural product of the sins of intemperance. Whereas, on the other side, a temperate, innocent use of the creature never casts any one into a fever or a surfeit. Chastity makes no work for the chirurgeon, nor ever ends in rottenness of bones. Sin is the fruitful parent of distempers, and ill lives occasion good physicians. Seldom shall one see in cities, courts, and rich families, where men live plentifully and eat and drink freely, that perfect health, that athletic soundness and vigour of consti-

tution, which is commonly seen in the country, in poor houses, and cottages, where nature is their cook and necessity their caterer, and where they have no other doctor but the sun and the fresh air, and that such an one as never sends them to the apothecary. It has been observed in the earlier ages of the church, that none lived such healthful and long lives as monks and hermits, who had sequestered themselves from the pleasures and plenties of the world to a constant ascetic course of the severest abstinence and devotion.

Nor is excess the only thing by which sin mauls and breaks men in their health and the comfortable enjoyment of themselves thereby, but many are also brought to a very ill and languishing habit of body by mere idleness; and idleness is both itself a great sin and the cause of many more. The husbandman returns from the field, and from manuring his ground, strong and healthy, because innocent and laborious. You will find no diet-drinks, no boxes of pills, nor galley-pots amongst his provisions; no, he neither speaks nor lives French; he is not so much a gentleman, forsooth. His meals are coarse and short, his employment warrantable, his sleep certain and refreshing, neither interrupted with the lashes of a guilty mind nor the aches of a crazy body; and when old age comes upon him, it comes alone, bringing no other evil with it but itself. But when it comes to wait upon a great and worshipful sinner, who for many years together has had the reputation of eating well

and doing ill, it comes, as it ought to do to a person of such quality, attended with a long train and retinue of rheums, coughs, catarrhs, and dropsies, together with many painful girds and convulsions, which are at least called the gout. How does such an one go about, or is carried, rather, with his body bending inward, his head shaking, and his eyes always watering, instead of weeping for the sins of his ill-spent youth ! In a word, old age seizes upon such a person like fire upon a rotten house ; it was rotten before, and must have fallen of itself, so that it is no more but one ruin preventing another.

And thus I have shown the fruits and effects of sin upon men in this world. But peradventure it will be replied that there are many sinners who escape all these calamities, and neither labour under any shame or disrepute, any unquietness of condition, or more than ordinary distemper of body, but pass their days with as great a portion of honour, ease, and health as any other men whatsoever. But to this I answer,

First, That those sinners who are in such a temporally happy condition owe it not to their sins, but wholly to their luck and a benign chance that they are so. Providence often disposes of things by a method beside and above the discourses of man's reason.

Second, That the number of those sinners, who by their sins have been directly plunged into all the fore-

mentioned evils, is incomparably greater than the number of those who, by the singular favour of Providence, have escaped them. And,

Third, That, notwithstanding all this, sin has yet in itself a natural tendency to bring men under all these evils ; and, if persisted in, will infallibly end in them, unless hindered by some unusual accident or other, which no man, acting rationally, can steadily build upon. It is not impossible but a man may practise a sin secretly to his dying-day ; but it is ten thousand to one, if the practice be constant, but that some time or other it will be discovered, and then the effect of sin discovered must be shame and confusion to the sinner. It is possible, also, that a man may be an old healthful epicure, but I affirm also that it is next to a miracle if he be so ; and the like is to be said of the several instances of sin hitherto produced by us. In short, nothing can step between them and misery in this world but a very great, strange, and unusual chance, which none will presume of who walks surely.

And so, I suppose, that religion cannot possibly be enforced, even in the judgment of its best friends and most professed enemies, by any further arguments than what have been produced, how much better soever the said arguments may be managed by abler hands. For I have shown and proved that whether the principles of it be certain or but probable, nay, though supposed absolutely false, yet a man is sure of that happiness in the practice which he cannot be in the

neglect of it ; and, consequently, that though he were really a speculative atheist (which there is great reason to believe that none perfectly are), yet if he would but proceed rationally, that is, if, according to his own measures of reason, he would but love himself, he could not be a practical atheist, nor live without God in this world, whether or no he expected to be rewarded by him in another.

And now, to make some application of the foregoing discourse, we may, by an easy but sure deduction, conclude and gather from it these two things :

First, that that profane, atheistical, epicurean rabble, whom the whole nation so rings of, and who have lived so much to the defiance of God, the dishonour of mankind, and the disgrace of the age which they are cast upon, are not, indeed, what they are pleased to think and vote themselves, the wisest men in the world ; for in matters of choice no man can be wise in any course or practice in which he is not safe too. But can these high assumers and pretenders to reason prove themselves so amidst all those liberties and latitudes of practice which they take ? Can they make it out, against the common sense and opinion of all mankind, that there is no such a thing as a future estate of misery for such as have lived ill here ? Or can they persuade themselves that their own particular reason, denying or doubting of it, ought to be relied upon as a surer argument of truth than the universal,

united reason of all the world besides affirming it? Every fool may believe and pronounce confidently, but wise men will, in matters of discourse, conclude firmly, and in matters of practice act surely. And if these will do so too in the case now before us, they must prove it not only probable, which yet they can never do, but also certain and past all doubt, that there is no hell nor place of torment for the wicked; or, at least, that they themselves, notwithstanding all their villanous and licentious practices, are not to be reckoned of that number and character, but that with a *non obstante* to all their revels, their profaneness, and scandalous debaucheries of all sorts, they continue *virtuosoes** still, and are that in truth which the world, in favour and fashion, or rather by an anti-phrasis, is pleased to call them.

In the meantime it cannot but be matter of just indignation to all knowing and good men to see a company of lewd, shallow-brained huffs, making atheism and contempt of religion the sole badge and character of wit, gallantry, and true discretion, and then over their pots and pipes claiming and engrossing all these wholly to themselves, magisterially censuring the wisdom of all antiquity, scoffing at all piety, and, as it were, new-modelling the whole world. When yet, such as have had opportunity to sound these braggers thoroughly by having sometimes endured the penance of their sottish company, have

* A play upon the word *virtuoso*.

found them in converse so empty and insipid, in discourse so trifling and contemptible, that it is impossible but that they should give a credit and an honour to whatsoever and whomsoever they speak against. They are, indeed, such as seem wholly incapable of entertaining any design above the present gratification of their palates, and whose very souls and thoughts rise no higher than their throats ; but yet withal of such a clamorous and provoking impiety, that they are enough to make the nation like Sodom and Gomorrah in their punishment, as they have already made it too like them in their sins. Certain it is that blasphemy and irreligion have grown to that daring height here of late years, that had men in any sober civilized heathen nation spoke or done half so much in contempt of their false gods and religion as some in our days and nation, wearing the name of Christians, have spoke and done against God and Christ, they would have been infallibly burnt at a stake as monsters and public enemies of society.

The truth is, the persons here reflected upon are of such a peculiar stamp of impiety, that they seem to be a set of fellows got together, and formed into a kind of diabolical society, for the finding out new experiments in vice, and therefore they laugh at the dull, inexperienced, obsolete sinners of former times, and, scorning to keep themselves within the common beaten Broadway to hell, by being vicious only at the low rate of example and imitation, they are for search-

ing out other ways and latitudes, and obliging posterity with unheard-of inventions and discoveries in sin ; resolving herein to admit of no other measure of good and evil but the judgment of sensuality, as those who prepare matters to their hands allow no other measure of the philosophy and truth of things, but the sole judgment of sense. And these, forsooth, are our great sages, and those who must pass for the only shrewd, thinking, and inquisitive men of the age, and such as by a long, severe, and profound speculation of nature, have redeemed themselves from the pedantry of being conscientious and living virtuously, and from such old-fashioned principles and creeds as tie up the minds of some narrow-spirited, uncomprehensive zealots who know not the world, nor understand that he only is the truly wise man who, *per fas et nefas*, gets as much as he can.

But, for all this, let atheists and sensualists satisfy themselves as they are able ; the former of which will find that, as long as reason keeps her ground, religion neither can nor will lose hers. And for the sensual epicure, he also will find that there is a certain living spark within him, which all the drink he can pour in will never be able to quench or put out, nor will his abused body have it in its power to convey any putrefying, consuming, rotting quality to the soul. No, there is no drinking, or swearing, or ranting, or fluxing a soul out of its immortality. But that must and will survive and abide, in spite of death

and the grave, and live for ever to convince such wretches, to their eternal woe, that the so much repeated ornament and flourish of their former speeches was commonly the truest word they spoke, though least believed by them while they spoke it.

Second. The other thing deducible from the foregoing particulars, shall be to inform us of the way of attaining to that excellent privilege, so justly valued by those who have it, and so much talked of by those who have it not—which is assurance. Assurance is properly that persuasion or confidence which a man takes up of the pardon of his sins, and his interest in God's favour upon such grounds and terms as the Scripture lays down. But now, since the Scripture promises eternal happiness and pardon of sin upon the sole condition of faith and sincere obedience, it is evident that he only can plead a title to such a pardon whose conscience impartially tells him that he has performed the required condition. And this is the only rational assurance which a man can with any safety rely or rest himself upon.

He who in this case would believe surely must walk surely, and to do so is to walk uprightly. And what that is, we have sufficiently marked out to us in those plain and legible lines of duty requiring us to demean ourselves to God humbly and devoutly, to our governors obediently, and to our neighbours justly, and to ourselves soberly and temperately ; all other pretences being infinitely vain in themselves and fatal in their consequences.

Obedience and upright walking are such substantial, vital parts of religion, as, if they be wanting, can never be made up or commuted for by any formalities of fantastic looks or language. And the great question, when we come hereafter to be judged, will not be, How demurely have you looked? or, How boldly have you believed? With what length have you prayed? and, With what loudness and vehemence have you preached? but, How holily have you lived? and, How uprightly have you walked? For this, and this only, through the merits of Christ's righteousness, will come into account before that great Judge who will pass sentence upon every man according to what he has done here in the flesh, whether it be good or whether it be evil; and there is no respect of persons with him.

THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION AND DELIVERANCE FROM IT.*

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, therefore will I keep thee from the hour of temptation, which is coming upon all the world, to try the inhabitants of the earth.—Rev. iii. 10.

AS deliverance out of temptation is undoubtedly one of the greatest mercies that God vouchsafes his people in this world, so there is nothing that more enhances and sets off the greatness of the mercy than the critical time of God's vouchsafing it. The wise man assures us that there is a time for every thing and purpose under heaven; a time which gives it a peculiar and proper advantage above what it has at other times. And therefore since the said advantage is universal, and extends to all kinds of action, we

* The sixth volume of South's collected Works contains a series of Discourses on Temptation. Of these some are doctrinal, some are practical. That on the *Hour of Temptation* is selected as being one of the shortest and the most characteristic. The great defect of this discourse, as of so many others by South, is that, whilst the work of Christ is not excluded, it holds a less prominent place than it ought. It is by faith in Christ that we are to be sanctified as well as justified.

must not wonder if the great enemy of souls has his time also, his particular advantageous time, to tempt and destroy, as God has his time to rescue and deliver.

But as in the vicissitudes of night and day the darkness of one recommends the return of the other, adding a kind of lustre even to light itself; so it is the hour of danger which sets a price and a value upon the hour of deliverance, and makes it more properly in season. "It shall be given you," says our Saviour to his disciples, "in that very hour,"* in the very point and crisis of their extremity, like a pardon intervening just as the fatal arm is lifting up, a pardon sent in the very instant of execution. And certainly, next to life from the dead, is to be near the killing stroke and yet snatched away from it; to see death brought to our very doors, and yet prevented from coming in.

The occasion of the words is indeed particular, as containing in them a prediction of the sad and calamitous estate of the church under the approaching reign of Trajan, the Roman emperor; but I shall not consider them under any such particular respect or limitation, but as they hold forth a general important lesson, or admonition, of equal and perpetual use to all men with reference to those spiritual trials, conflicts, and temptations which will be sure to exercise and engage them in the course of their Christian

* Matt. x. 19.

warfare ; and, accordingly, I shall cast the prosecution of the words under these four particulars.

I. I shall show that there is a certain proper season or hour, which gives a peculiar force and efficacy to temptation.

II. I shall show by what means, helps, and advantages a temptation attains its proper season or hour.

III. I shall show some signs, marks, or diagnostics, whereby we may discern when it has actually attained it.

IV. and lastly, draw some useful inferences from the whole.

I. That there is a certain proper season or hour, which gives a peculiar force, strength, and efficacy to temptation.

It is observed in all those actions or passages which cause any great and notable change, either in the mind or life of man, that they do not constantly operate at the same rate of efficacy, but that there is a certain crisis, or particular season, which strangely provokes and draws forth the activity and force of every agent, raising it to effects much greater and higher than the common measure of its actings is observed to carry it to.

In like manner there is a determinate, proper time, sometimes called in Scripture the day of temptation,* sometimes the evil day,† and sometimes, as here in

* Psa. xcv. 8.

† Eph. vi. 13.

the text and elsewhere, remarkably the hour of temptation ; a time in which temptation is infinitely more fierce and daring, more urgent and impetuous, than at other times ; a time in which, with all its might, it comes rushing in upon the soul, like the *fluctus decumanus** upon the labouring ship or vessel, which always gives it the greatest and most dangerous shock.

We know our Saviour conversed freely and safely with the Jews for a considerable time, coming into the temple and teaching in their synagogues ; and they stretched forth no hands against him, as he himself tells us ;† and yet all this while, quiet as they held their hands, they had malice enough working in their hearts, and opportunity enough to have exerted that malice in their actions. Nevertheless, for that time they touched him not.

But how then came the devil and his instruments to have so much power at length as to apprehend, and seize, and put him to a cruel, ignominious death ? Our Saviour gives us the reason of it in the next words. "This," says he, "is their hour, and the power of darkness." Accordingly we have him praying, that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him ;‡ and again, "The hour is come, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."§

And it is worth observing, that though our Saviour

* The tenth wave, which was believed to be the most violent.

† Luke xxii. 58.

‡ Mark xiv. 35.

§ Mark xiv. 41.

began his great office and ministry with temptations,* and carried it on under temptations—"Ye are those," says he to his disciples, "who have continued with me in my temptations"†—yet the Scripture records not his praying in his own person against any temptation but only this last and great one, this hour of temptation, this terrible and critical hour, in which it pleased the All-wise God to let loose all the powers of hell upon him, and in which they spit the utmost of their venom, and summoned all their hellish arts and forces to give one mighty push for all. And it was the behaviour of Christ at this hour, upon which depended the eternal happiness or misery of mankind, and the vast moments of the world's redemption.

And as it was with Christ himself, who did and suffered everything as a public person, and, consequently, was tempted as well as crucified for us, so it will be with every Christian in the world. Christ vouchsafed to be like us in most things, and we shall certainly be like him in this.

And from this consideration, no doubt, it is that we must gather the true sense and exposition of that noted place,‡ in which the apostle bids us resist the devil, and he will fly from us. But experience sufficiently shows that upon every act of resistance he does not fly, but that his assaults are frequent, and oftentimes continue very long ; nay, the frequency of

* Matt. iv. 1.

† Luke xxii. 28.

‡ James iv. 7.

the onset, and the length of the siege, are usually some of the principal methods by which he conquers, and brings the soul to a surrender. And if so, what can the particular kind of resistance be which proves so victorious, and sends him going like a vanquished person? Why, no question it must be eminently that which withstands and encounters him at that particular hour or season in which the temptation is come to a head, and in which it has all the helps and advantages for conquest imaginable.

For if the tempter miscarries in this his highest, his sharpest, and most violent attack, it is natural to conceive that he must surcease the conflict, draw off, and give it over for that time at least. For if his twenty thousand prevail not, to what purpose can it be for him to carry on the war with ten? Or what should an enemy do more who has already done his utmost?

And thus much for the first thing proposed, which was to show that there is a certain proper season or hour which gives a peculiar force, strength, and efficacy to temptation.

II. I proceed now to show by what means, helps, and advantages a temptation attains its proper season or hour. And for this I shall mention seven, beginning at the more remote, and so proceeding to such as bring it still nearer and nearer to a head.

I. For that which is most remote, but yet the very source and groundwork of all the mischief which the

devil either does or can do to the souls of men, namely, that original, universal corruption of man's nature, containing in it the seeds and first principles of all sins whatsoever, and more or less disposing a man to the commission of them. For it is this which administers the first materials for the tempter to work upon, and without which it is certain that he could do nothing. For when he set upon our Saviour with all his rage and subtlety, yet still he was worsted and beaten off; and the reason of it is assigned by our Saviour himself in those words: "The prince of this world (says he) cometh, and hath nothing in me;"* that is, nothing for any of his temptations to fasten upon. The infinite purity of his nature, free from the least inherent filth, afforded no handle for the tempter to lay hold of him by. He was like pure fountain-water in a glass, which you may shake and shake as much and as often as you will, but no shaking of it can ever foul it. On the contrary, let a liquor in any vessel look never so clear and transparent upwards, yet if there be the least settlement or heterogeneous matter in any part of it, shake it thoroughly and it will be sure to show itself.

In like manner when the tempter comes to any of us, he knows that there is something lurking in the heart of the very best of men which he can make foul work with, if the particular grace of God does not prevent him, as it is certain that in many cases it does

* John xiv. 30.

not. Temptation first finds a man evil, and then makes him worse.

2. The next advantage is from that particular corruption or sort of sin which a man is most peculiarly prone and inclined to, and this is one step and advance beyond the former. For though every man has the root and seeds of all sins virtually in him, yet, through the good providence of God, no man is equally inclined or carried out to all sorts of sin, for that would quickly throw the whole world into confusion. But there is a particular bent of constitution which derives and contracts the general stream of natural corruption into a much narrower channel, by that special propensity which every man finds in himself, to some one kind of vice or sinful passion more than to any other. Such a thing there is certainly in all men, and being founded in nature, it sticks closely and operates strongly.

And so advantageous a ground does this afford the tempter to plant his batteries upon when he would assault us, that he never overlooks it, but observes it exactly, and studies it thoroughly, and will be sure to *nick* this governing inclination, as I may so express it, with some suitable temptation. So that, whereas by virtue of this some men are naturally choleric and impatient, some proud and ambitious, some lustful, some covetous, some intemperate, and some revengeful, and the like, this the devil knows better than any man knows himself. He understands the temperament of his body, and the peculiar turns and motions

of his mind and fancy better than any physician can judge of one, or any philosopher can give an account of the other ; and, accordingly, a man shall be sure to hear from him, and receive many a terrible blow and buffet on his blind side.

He is not such a bungler at his art as to use the same nets or baits indifferently for all sorts of game. He will not tempt a shrewd, designing, active, aspiring mind with the gross and low pleasures of wine or women ; nor a sot or an epicure with the more refined allurements of power or high place : but still suiting his proposals to the temper of the person whom he addresses them to, he strikes for the most part home and sure, and it is seldom but he speeds. And therefore let a man look to it, and before he enters the combat with so experienced an enemy, who will assuredly find him out, and fight him, if possible, to his disadvantage, let him view and review himself all over, and consider where he lies most opportune and open to a fatal thrust, and be sure to guard himself there where he is most liable to be mortally struck.

3. A third advantage towards the prevailing hour of a temptation is the continual offer of alluring objects and occasions extremely agreeable to a man's particular corruption. Fire cannot burn without fuel, and the strongest inclinations would in a little time faint and languish if there were not objects to invigorate and draw them forth ; nay, and the very faculties of the mind would grate and prey upon themselves if

they found no matter from without to work and to whet upon. Something there must be to employ them ; and whatsoever employs will, at the same rate, also improve them.

And, therefore, the world is like a great storehouse full of all sorts of provisions for men's lusts, so that whatsoever course may be taken to mortify or extinguish them, it is certain that, being left to themselves, they will never die of want ; for there are riches for the covetous, honours for the ambitious, and pleasures for the voluptuous. And so keen and eager are the appetites of corrupt nature towards these things, that where such plentiful, and withal such suitable preparations come before them, they will be sure to fall to. And such, moreover, is the mutual agreeableness between them, that they never fail to find out one another ; either such objects to find out the heart, or the heart them. And if there could chance to be any failure or defect upon this account, there is an old pander, the prince of pimps, always at hand, who makes it his great business and perpetual study to bring them together, and will never suffer a vicious inclination to starve for want of a suitable object to feed it.

4. And this introduces the fourth advantage or furtherance towards the maturity or prevalent season of a temptation, which is the unspeakable malice and activity, together with the incredible skill and boldness, of the tempter. Now malice and envy are, of all

ill qualities, the most fierce, active, and indefatigable, admitting neither peace nor truce with their respective objects ; and, accordingly, being much higher, and more sublimated in the devil's nature than they can be in man's, they carry him roving and ranging about the world like a roaring, insatiable lion, night and day upon the search for whom he may devour ; and the more he has devoured the greater is his appetite to devour more. His mouth is always open, and his eyes never shut. He is restless and unwearied, and though idleness be a sin which he loves to tempt men to, yet he is never guilty of it himself.

To which we may add his profound skill and cunning in the various arts, wiles, and stratagems which he has to overreach and circumvent even the wisest and most watchful. It is enough to say of his cunning, that it is equal to his diligence and not inferior to his malice.

And then, in the last place, so intolerable is his boldness, or rather impudence, that no repulse shall daunt, no defeat discourage him, nor any degree of holiness deter him from tempting even the best of men to the very worst of sins ; for he set upon Adam in his innocence and prevailed ; nay, and he ventured upon our Saviour himself, and that again and again ; and though as often as he spoke he was baffled, yet still, though baffled, he would not be silenced ; he received foil after foil, and was thrice conquered before he would quit the field.

From all which qualifications united in our mortal enemy, let this be concluded upon—that as certain as it is that there is such an evil spirit in the world, so certain is it that every man living has a restless, implacable, subtle, audacious adversary, who will infallibly engage and fall upon him, and with his utmost skill and force dispute it with him for his salvation.

5. Over and above all this, God sometimes, in his wise providence and just judgment, commissions this implacable spirit to tempt at a rate more than ordinary. And this must needs be a further advantage towards the ripening of a temptation than any of the former. I shall not presume to assign all the reasons why God is pleased to do this ; but it is enough that sometimes to try and manifest men's graces, as when he commissioned the devil to try and tempt Job in that terrible manner ;* sometimes to reproach them for their weakness in conjunction with their absurd confidence, as when, at the tempter's own instance, he allowed him to winnow and tempt Peter ;† and sometimes to punish them for former great sins, as when he empowered the evil spirit to persuade that monster of wickedness and firstborn of hell, King Ahab, to go up and perish at Ramoth Gilead.‡ “Thou shalt persuade him,” says God, “and prevail also. Go forth, and do so.” I say, it is enough that for these and the like ends, especially in the way of judgment for former guilt, God is sometimes pleased to

* Job i. 12.

† Luke xxii. 31.

‡ 1 Kings xxii. 22.

take this dreadful course with men ; nothing being more true than that, as temptation brings a man to sin, so sin also brings him to temptation.

But the thing which I would chiefly observe from hence is, that in all such cases in which the devil acts by commission from above, he tempts, as we may say, with authority, and consequently with more than usual vehemence and success ; always using the former, and seldom failing of the latter ; as indeed it is hard to imagine how he should, when the only thing that can stand between him and success, to wit, the Divine grace, in the case here supposed by us, is withdrawn, and the man thereby left wholly to himself. And whosoever has any experience in these matters will easily acknowledge that for a man to be left to himself, and to be left to the devil, will be found in the issue but one and the same thing.

6. A sixth advantage by which a temptation approaches to its crisis is a previous, growing familiarity of the mind with the sin which a man is tempted to, whereby he comes to think of it with still lesser and lesser abhorrences than formerly he was wont to do. Frequent thoughts of a thing naturally wear off the strangeness of it, for by these the mind converses with its object, and conversation breeds acquaintance with things as well as persons.

Upon which account, when any ill thing is suggested to the mind, whether from a man's own corruption within, or from the devil, or the examples of

wicked men without, if it be not immediately rejected with a present and particular act of abhorrence, it will leave some small impression upon or disposition in the mind towards that ill thing which before it had not and otherwise would not have.

Which impressions, or dispositions, though small and inconsiderable at first, yet by the frequent repetition of such like thoughts or suggestions, will in the issue amount to something very dangerous, and either produce in the heart a positive inclination to, or at least extinguish its former aversion from the sin suggested to it. Either of which will assuredly be made use of by the tempter, and by degrees prepare and smooth him a way, and at length open a door for the temptation in its full force and fury to enter. The serpent has already got in his head, and his whole body will not be long behind.

7. There is yet another way by which a temptation arrives to its highest pitch or proper hour, and that is by a long train of gradual, imperceivable encroaches of the flesh upon the spirit. I say, imperceivable for the present, and considered each of them singly and by themselves; but sufficiently perceivable after that some considerable space of time and a frequent iteration of them has wrought such a change in the soul as to a spiritual discernment will quickly show and discover itself.

The meaning of which I conceive will be best declared and made intelligible by particular in-

stances, having first premised this great and certain rule, viz., that whatsoever tends to gratify or strengthen the flesh, in the same proportion or degree tends to weaken the spirit ; and look in what degree the spirit is weakened, in the same degree it is prepared for and laid open to a temptation.

Now there are several enjoyments in themselves very lawful, and yet such as, upon a free unwary use of them, will by degrees certainly indispose and unspiritualize the mind, dulling its appetite, and taking off its edge and relish to the things of God. A man's food, his sleep, his recreations, nay, and his very business, if not ordered by the arts and conduct of the spirit, may prove a snare to him, and draw off his heart by secret estrangements from those spiritual duties and disciplines in which the very health and life of his soul consists.

So that after some time so spent, a man shall have lost his heart, he knows not how nor which way, and by what dark escapes it has slipped from him he shall hardly be able to learn, only he shall find that when he should make use of it it is gone. For the reason of which it is enough that the flesh has got ground of the spirit ; the rise of one being still the fall of the other. And when, after such a course either of extreme solicitude or intentness upon business on the one hand, or of gaiety and freedom of conversation on the other, the frame of a man's spirit comes to be loose and unfixed, and took off from its usual guard, then

let him know that the evil hour is preparing for him and he for that. His enemy is not far off, and it will not be long before he hears from him in some fierce temptation or other.

And thus I have done with the second particular proposed, and shown the several helps and advantages by which a temptation ripens and arrives to its proper hour and full maturity.

III. To show some signs, marks, and diagnostics, whereby we may discern when a temptation has attained its proper season or hour, I shall instance only in three, as,

1. When there is a strange, peculiar, and more than usual juncture and concurrence of all circumstances and opportunities for the commission of any sin, that especially which a man is most inclined to, then, no doubt, is the hour of temptation.

Sometimes a man shall see the scene of things round about him so fitly laid and prepared to serve him in the gratification of his corrupt desires, that he cannot but conclude that there was something more than blind chance which brought him into that condition ; for when we see a net or snare curiously and artificially placed, we may be sure that there is something intended to be caught, and that the fowler is not far off, whether we see him or no.

Judas, no doubt, had temptation to gratify his covetous humour before he betrayed his Master ; for

St. John has given us his character, that he was a thief, and carried the bag,* and that more to serve himself than any one else. But the great hour was not come that he should show himself so till he had that opportunity of trucking with the priests, and then he quickly swallowed the sop and the treason together, sold his conscience, and put his Master's blood in his pocket.

A corrupt principle may be strong though it be still, and as strong at one time as at another, though it does not always break out into the same exorbitance of sin. But when occasion improves and quickens it, circumstances help and encourage it, and opportunities further and push it on ; then you shall see, not only what a day, but even what an hour of temptation can bring forth. Fire has always the same consuming quality, though it does not always make work for a breve.† Sometimes it is quenched as soon as kindled ; but when the wind strikes in with it, and both strengthens and spreads the flame, and the matter upon which it seizes is more than ordinarily catching and combustible, and all means of extinguishing and stopping the progress of it are out of the way, then, and not till then, it shall reign and rage with a boundless irresistible fury, and show you how much another kind of thing it is while it is your servant and when it comes to be your master ; while it serves the occasions of the house

* John xii. 6.

† A begging-letter.

upon the hearth, and when it comes to lord it upon the roof.

Now the case of a man's corruption, before and under the crisis of a temptation, is much after this manner. When it comes against him with all its recruits, all its auxiliaries, all its peculiar advantages, then let him expect a battle, and know that he is to combat a prepared enemy, who has prevented him, and comes to fight him upon the vantage-ground. And as it was said of the stars fighting in their courses against Sisera,* so may it be said of a man brought into such a condition that all the circumstances of time, place, person, and the like, shall jointly fight against him, inflame his corruption, heighten and give life to the temptation, driving it home like so many mighty strokes upon a wedge, strong and sharp-pointed, and apt enough to enter, and makes its way of itself.

2. A second sign of a temptation's drawing near its hour is a strange averseness to duty and a backwardness to, if not a neglect of, the spiritual exercises of prayer, reading, and meditation. Now as every principle of life has some suitable aliment or provision, by which both its being is continued and its strength supported, so the forementioned duties are the real proper nutriment by which the spiritual life is kept up and maintained in the vigorous exercise of its vital powers.

* Judges v. 20.

And as in all other things, when the great instrument of life, appetite to food, fails them, it is an undoubted argument of some notable disturbance or decay of nature, so when the soul begins to disrelish its daily nourishment of prayer, watchfulness, and strict communion with God, it is an infallible sign that it is under some present disorder, and possibly not far from some mortal distemper.

A man at first perhaps feels a kind of grudging and uneasiness all over his body, a deadness and a drowsiness upon his senses, and he cannot well tell what he ails; but after a few days these uncertain beginnings come to rage in a burning fever, or to strike him with an apoplex; and then it appears what those symptoms foreboded and tended to all along; and the great question now is, not when or how soon the man shall recover and be well, but whether or no he shall live.

In like manner, when a man finds it thus with himself, as to the state of his soul, that his former freshness and fervour in the service of God is abated, and that his heart either flies off from the duties of religion or performs them with a cold, faint, languishing indifference, in the judgment of all those guides of souls who discourse most experimentally and knowingly of these matters, such an one has all the reason in the world to suspect that there is some notable mischief designed him by his spiritual enemy, and that he is entering upon some dangerous trial, some

critical, searching temptation, which will be sure to probe him to the bottom, to shake all the powers of his soul, and from which, if the Divine mercy does in the issue deliver him, yet it will be so as by fire, by smart, and difficulty, and great unlikelihoods, and by such near approaches to, and narrow rescues from destruction, that it will be matter of horror to him to reflect upon his very deliverance, and the danger will be terrible, even after it is escaped.

3. The third and last sign that I shall mention of a temptation's attaining its full hour or maturity, is a more than usual restlessness and importunity in its enticings or instigations ; for it is the tempter's last assault, and therefore will certainly be furious ; the last pass which he makes at the soul, and therefore will be sure to be driven home ; for he knows that if he succeeds now, he is absolutely victorious, and that if he miscarries in this his last action, all his former arts and attempts vanish and fall to nothing.

So that upon such a promising concurrence of all those mighty advantages which we have mentioned, nothing can remain further to speed his design, but that he presses on to victory, by charging forcibly and frequently ; and this he will sometimes do with such fury, pouring in arguments upon the mind so thick and fast, that all contrary considerations and arguings, by which it would fence against the power of his proposals, shall be either stifled with the multitude or

overborn with the urgency and impudence of his solicitations.

There have been strange examples of men brought into such a condition. It is reported of Luther, that being tempted to make away with himself, the temptation grew so fierce and pressing upon him, that, falling into an agony, and, as it were, struggling for life, he had no other way to defend himself but, during the conflict, by frequently urging and repeating over and over to himself the Sixth Commandment, "Thou shalt do no murder—Thou shalt do no murder:" that so, by encountering this fiery dart with the continually renewed evidence of the sin, offered full and fresh to his faith in the peremptory express words of the precept, he might relieve his labouring mind against the present violence of that impious suggestion.

The tempter in this action behaves himself just as you shall see some eager, ill-bred petitioners, who do not so properly supplicate, or hunt the person whom they address, dogging him from place to place, till they even extort an answer to their rude requests. So in this case, a man shall find himself not only importuned, but even invaded. The temptation shall in a manner break in upon him, and follow him without pause or intermission, so that he shall not be able to discharge his mind of the irksome, incessant representations of the sin to which it solicits him; but his imagination shall be possessed, and his thoughts so

far entangled with it, that they shall have no power to divert or pass off to any other thing. And now, when a temptation has arrived to this pitch, the tempted person may assure himself that it is at its high crisis, its hour is come, and he is actually engaged in a dispute for his soul, and nothing less than the keeping or losing it for ever is the thing which is contended for.

And thus I have also done with the third particular at first proposed, and given you three several signs or marks by which the spiritually wise and watchful may observe the motions of their grand enemy, and discern the approach of the fatal season ; of all which we may say, as Christ did of those signs that were to portend his own coming, "When you shall see these things come to pass, then know that it is nigh, even at the doors."* So when a man shall find these things come upon him, he must know that though he is not actually conquered and trodden down, yet the enemy is in his quarters, and the sword at his breast ; and if these dangers alarm him not, he is beside the remedies of mercy and the admonitions of grace ; he is passing into a state of hardness and insensibility, and, for aught appears, under all the sad likelihoods of a perishing condition.

And thus at length we are come to our

IV. Fourth and last particular, which was to draw

* Mark xiii. 29.

some useful inferences from the whole discourse, and many such might be drawn from thence ; but I shall insist only upon three, and that very briefly, as,

1. That every time in which a man is tempted is not properly the hour of temptation. A man in his Christian course may meet with several assaults and spiritual encounters, which he easily masters and breaks through ; but if from these slight efforts or vellications, as we may call them, he shall conclude that the tempter can do no more, and from former success in smaller combats shall promise himself certain and final victory in all future conflicts, he will find himself deceived and imposed upon by false measures taken from insufficient experience. For probably the temptation at those times might not have got all those helps and advantages about it which were necessary to give it its full strength.

Temptation has its daily risings and fallings, ebbings and flowings, and a man must daily and of course expect them. But the great danger is not from hence, but when, by a kind of periodical revolution or return, it comes, as I may so speak, to its spring-tide, then let a man look to his spiritual banks and mounds that the flood break not in upon him, and the killing waters, as the psalmist expresses it, come not in even to his soul.

The life and business of a Christian is but too truly a warfare, and a sharp one too ; and no warrior must think himself sufficiently informed by a few ante-

cedent skirmishes what the whole body and united force of his enemy can do in the main heat of the battle ; for after a man has been victorious in the former, he may be, and very often is, shamefully worsted and overthrown in the latter.

2. The second thing which we shall infer from the foregoing particulars is, that every man living, some time or other, sooner or later, shall assuredly meet with an hour of temptation ; a certain critical hour, which shall more especially try what mettle his heart is made of, and in which the eternal concerns of his soul shall more particularly lie at stake. So that if he does not quit himself like a man, and make good his station against this principal assault of his spiritual adversary, a failure or miscarriage then will prove like an oversight in the day of battle, hardly to be recovered by any after-reparation.

It is indeed called an hour, but it is such an hour as has an eternity depending on it, and consequently makes a whole life little enough to prepare for it. The advice of the son of Sirach is excellent and home to the case,* “My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation.” And great reason, doubtless, has a man to prepare for that which will assuredly be prepared for him, and from which no privilege of Christianity does or can exempt the very holiest and perfectest of men. For gold itself must be tried, and must pass the furnace for that purpose.

* Eccles. ii. 1.

Now the two great ways of trial by which men are generally brought to a dividing point are by their hopes and their fears. And for the most part the tempter uses to accost men first by their hopes, and to bid fair and high, to see what they will take for their souls ; and if he finds that they will come to no bargain with him, but that his offers are rejected, and so this course succeeds not, then he will see what he can do upon their fears, and try whether he can fright or disgrace, beggar or kill, men out of their consciences. These, I say, are the two old stated methods by which his temptations are usually wrought up to a pitch ; and if the tempter cannot prevail one way, let not men flatter themselves, but rest assured that he will take the other. If he cannot speed as a merchant, he will try what he can do as a warrior.

What our Saviour says of offences* holds equally true of temptations, that it must needs be that they will come. And, accordingly, that declaration of his runs absolute and positive, " If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, wife and children, brethren and sisters, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."† This is the terrible decree and sentence of Christianity. And that critical, searching hour, of which we have been hitherto discoursing, is the great instrument of Providence to draw forth and place those two commanding motives of men's actions and rivals for their choice, duty and interest, one

* Matt. xviii. 7.

† Luke xiv. 26.

against the other, and to set the offers of this world and the promises of the next, the enjoyments of one and the hopes of the other, in their full competition. And when, after a thorough debate on both sides, the deciding cast and issue of the whole matter comes to this—"Either part with your conscience or your pleasures, your conscience or your interest, your conscience or your estate; nay, your conscience or your very life"—then let a man know that the hour of temptation has overtaken him, and God and his holy angels sit as spectators in heaven, looking down and observing how he will behave and govern himself in this great crisis; in the whole carriage of which, as he is most particularly and directly under God's eye, so it will be a vast help and advantage to him to place God immovably before his.

In the meantime, let this be fixed and concluded upon, that such a season, such an hour, will come; and that when it is come, every man must expect to fare in it according as he has prepared himself for it. And this directly brings us to the

3. Third and last inference, which I shall make from the words, namely, that the surest way to carry us safe and successful through this great and searching hour of probation, is a strict, steady, conscientious living up to the rules of our religion, which the text here calls "a keeping the word of Christ's patience;" a denomination given to the gospel from that peculiar, distinguishing grace which the great Author of the

gospel was pleased to signalize it for, above all other religions and institutions in the world, and that both by his precept and example. And therefore we must not take *patience* here in the new and lately current sense of the word. . . . The Christian religion, both in itself and in its Author, is a suffering religion ; a religion teaching suffering, enjoining suffering, and rewarding suffering ; and, to express all in a word, it was Christ's passive obedience which redeemed the world. And for any one who wears the name of a Christian to scoff at or write against it, and at the same time to look to be saved by it, is certainly very strange and preposterous, and too much in all conscience for any but such professors of Christianity as live and practise in a direct defiance of their profession.

But to pass to that which I principally intend, I say it is a steady, uniform practice of the common, constant duties of Christianity which is the Christian's surest preservative against this great and critical day of trial. It is not any one strange, superlative act or acts of mortification, nor any high strain of discipline or severity upon ourselves (though of excellent use, doubtless, in their proper place), but it is the constant even tenour of a holy life which will be found the best security against the tempter, as no one blow, how great soever discharged upon an enemy, is so certain a protection against him as a continual posture of defence.

Great disputes there are about religion, and great

reason there is that men should be zealous for the truth ; nevertheless, be a man's belief never so true, an ill life will certainly send him to the devil. And it is really a very senseless and ridiculous thing for an ill-liver to be zealous about any religion, it being much the same case as if one who had a diseased, corrupt body should be extremely solicitous about the colour of his clothes. For suppose a man a murderer, an adulterer, or a perjured, false person, can any profession in the world do such an one any good ? No, it is impossible ; for if his religion be false it will further his damnation, and if true it will aggravate it.

Nothing but the word of Christ's patience derived into practice, and digested into a good life, can keep a man firm in the terrible shaking day of temptation—a day which every one who knows the true value of a soul will be always providing against. And that he may do it effectually, let him follow the course which I shall here briefly mention and mark out to him, and so conclude.

As first, let him be frequent and fervent in prayer, and in his devotions to God, both public and private. In the next place, let him be exact and impartial in the great work of self-examination, looking often and narrowly into the state of his soul, and clearing all accounts and old scores between God and his conscience. Moreover, let him be much and serious in considering the extreme vanity, emptiness, and shortness of all those worldly enjoyments which the

generality of men do so much doat upon. And lastly, above all, let him daily and hourly, and with the closest intention of mind, meditate of death and judgment, of the certainty and horror of them, and the intolerable misery of such as shall be overtaken by them in their sins.

And when a man shall have inured and beaten himself to such thoughts as these for some considerable time, the allurements of the flesh and the world will be but dry, tasteless, insipid things to him ; and if the tempter comes, all the avenues and passages to such a soul will be found shut and bolted against his temptations, so that he must withdraw and begone, for where he finds a man so doing, he will find nothing to do himself.

In a word, such a course of living will make that which is generally one of the greatest hours of temptation, even the hour of death itself, neither terrible nor strange ; so that, although it should be sudden, yet it shall not be surprising, as having nothing more to do with such an one, but only to take him out of this world, which in mind and desire he has left already, and to carry him to heaven where his conversation was before.

THE HEART AND ITS TREASURE- HOUSE.

A DISCOURSE PREACHED AT CHRIST CHURCH, OXON, BEFORE THE
UNIVERSITY.

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Matt. vi. 21.

AS man is naturally a creature of great want and weakness, so he does as naturally carry a most intimate and inseparable sense of that want and weakness about him. And because a state of want must needs be also a state of uneasiness, there is nothing which nature puts a man with so much force and earnestness upon as to attempt a supply and relief of the wants which he is so sensible of and so incommoded by, insomuch that the whole course of his actings, from first to last, proceeds in this method : first, that every action which a man does is in order to his compassing or obtaining to himself some good thereby ; and secondly, that he endeavours to compass or obtain this good because he desires it ; and thirdly

and lastly, that he desires it because he wants it, or, at least, thinks that he does so. So that the first spring, which sets all the wheels and faculties of the soul a-going, is a man's apprehension of some good wanting to complete the happiness of his condition.

But as every good is not in the same degree contributive to this happiness, so neither is it in the same degree desirable ; and, therefore, since want, as we have noted, is still the measure as well as ground of desire, that which answers all the wants, and fills all the vacuities of a rational nature, must needs be the full and ultimate object of its desires. And this was called by the philosophers man's *summum bonum*, and here, by our Saviour, man's treasure ; both expressions importing a good so comprehensively great and equal to all the appetites of nature, that the presence and possession of this alone renders a man happy, and the want or absence of it miserable ; upon which account, though it be impossible that this prime or chief good should admit of any plurality so as to be really more than one, yet since men take it in by their apprehensions, which are so exceedingly subject to error and deception even in their highest concerns, and since error is various, and, indeed, infinite, hence it is that this treasure or *summum bonum* falls under a very great multiplicity ; this man proposing to himself one thing, and that man another, and a third something else, for his chief good ; and that from which alone he expects all that happiness and satis-

faction which the condition of his nature renders him either capable or desirous of.

Now the words of the text may be considered two ways :

I. As they are an entire proposition in themselves ; and

II. As they are an argument relating to and enforcing of a foregoing precept ;* and accordingly, in the prosecution of them, we shall take in both considerations.

I. If we take them as they are an entire proposition in themselves, so they offer us these two things :

Something supposed, which is, that every man has something or other which he accounts his treasure or chief good ; and

Something expressly declared, namely, that whatsoever a man accounts his treasure or chief good, upon that he places his heart, his whole desires and affections.

And first, for the thing supposed or implied in the words, to wit, that every man has something or other which he accounts his treasure or chief good, the truth and certainty of which proposition will appear founded upon these two things :

1. The activity of man's mind.
2. The method of his acting.

* Ver. 19, 20.

1. For the first of these. The mind of man is of that spirituous, stirring nature, that it is perpetually at work ; something it is still in pursuit of, either by contemplation or desire. The foundation of this latter is want, and consequently, as man will be always wanting something or other, so he will be always sending forth his desires to hunt after and bring that thing in which he wants ; which is so true, that some men having compassed the greatest and noblest objects of their desires, so that desire could no longer ascend as being already at the top, they have betook themselves to inferior and ignoble exercises. So that, amongst the Roman emperors, then lords of a great part of the world, we find Nero at his harp, Domitian killing flies, and Commodus playing the fencer ; and all this only to busy themselves some way or other : nothing being so grievous and tedious to human nature as perfect idleness.

But now there is not anything, though never so mean and trivial, which a man does, but he antecedently designs himself some satisfaction by the doing of it, so that he advances to every action as to a degree of happiness, as to something which, according to its measure and proportion, will gratify or please him, and without which he would be in that degree uneasy and troublesome to himself. The spirit of a man, like a flame, being of such an operative and withal of such a catching quality, that it is still closing in with some desirable, suitable good, as the food that

nourishes and the subject that supports it, so impossible is it that desire should wholly lie still. For though the soul had actually all that it could enjoy, yet then desire would run out into the future, and, from the present fruition, project the continuance and preservation of its beloved object. In short, what blood is to the body, that desire is to the soul ; and as the blood will circulate while the body lives, so desire will act and range about while the soul subsists, and nothing but the annihilation of one can supersede or stop the motion of the other.

And the truth is, this innate restlessness of desire implanted in the soul of man is the great engine by which God would draw it to himself. And if men would be so far true to themselves, and to the most ruling principles of their nature, as to keep desire still upon the advance, till it fixed upon something which would absolutely and fully satisfy it, it were impossible but that, in the issue, it should terminate in God. But that which makes this great principle so ineffective of any true happiness to man, is that he does not carry it constantly and directly forward, but often suffers it to recur or turn aside to former false satisfactions, first tasting an object, and then, upon trial, leaving it for its emptiness, and yet afterwards returning to it again, from a vain hope to speed better than he had done before. So that by this means there is a continual restless circulation from one empty thing to another. The soul, in this case, being just like a

sick man, still altering his postures in order to his ease ; though, when he has tried all, he finds no more ease in one than in another, a certain demonstration that the soul itself, in the present state of nature, is in a most deplorably sick and disordered condition. But

2. The second argument, to prove that every man has something or other which he accounts his treasure, his peculiar or chief good, shall be taken from the method of his actings, which still proceeds by a direction of means to one great and last end. For as an infinite progress is exploded, in all matters of ratiocination, as absurd and impossible, so it is equally absurd in matters of practice ; it being not more necessary to assign and fix some first principle of discourse, than to state some last end of acting. All a man's practices hang loose and uncertain, unless they are governed and knit together by the prospect of some certain end.

For though a man has not continually and actually the prospect of that end in every one of his actions, yet he has it habitually and virtually, forasmuch as being once designed by him, all his actions tend to and promote the compassing of it ; as it is not necessary that a traveller should have his journey's end in his thoughts every step that he takes, but it is enough that he first designs it, and in the strength of that design is by every step carried nearer and nearer to it. Every man has some prime, paramount object

which employs his head and fills his heart, rules his thoughts and, as it were, lies in his bosom, and is to him above and instead of all other enjoyments whatsoever. And thus much for the thing supposed or implied in the words, namely, that every man has some peculiarly valued thing, which he accounts his treasure or chief good.

Another thing to be considered by us is that which is expressly declared in the text, namely, that whatsoever a man places his treasure or his chief good in, upon that he places his heart also ; where, according to the language of Scripture, the word heart compendiously denotes to us all the powers and faculties of man's soul, together with their respective motions and operations. And since the word treasure is a metaphorical term for a man's prime or chief good, we are to take an account how a man prosecutes this good from the analogy of those actions which he exerts with reference to a treasure, and which, I conceive, may be reduced to these four:

- i. A restless and laborious endeavour to acquire and possess himself of it. There is no man who heartily, and in good earnest, desires to be rich, or great, or learned, who can be idle ; for desire is the spring of diligence, and the heart infallibly sets both head and hands and everything else on work. Great desire is like a great fire, and all difficulties before it are like stubble ; it will certainly make its way through

them and devour them. From whence it is that it generally proves so dangerous, and too often fatal, to stand between a man, especially if in place and power, and that which he most desires; and many innocent and brave persons have, to their cost, found it so; for dangers and death itself shall be nothing, conscience and religion nothing, nay, the very hopes of heaven and the fears of hell shall be accounted as nothing, when a furious, headstrong desire shall resolve to break through them all, and, like Hannibal in his march, cut through rocks and mountains, till it either finds or makes a way to its beloved object. What made Jacob think those seven years of hard service for Rachel but a few days,* but the extraordinary and invincible love which he bore to her? And what makes the trader into foreign countries defy the winds and the seas, and hazard the safety which he actually has and loves, but the wealth which he loves more? All the stupendous instances of courage, patience, industry, and the like, which have so swelled the volumes of history, and amused the world, have been but the effects of great and victorious desire; they are all of them but the instruments of love, to compass the things which men have first set their hearts upon; so that when courage takes the field for battle, we may be sure that it is desire which leads it on, filling the mind with glorious ideas of the prize it contends for. All the noble violences done to

* Gen. xxix. 20.

nature have been resolvable into this cause ; nay, the very restraints of appetite have been but the effects of an appetite more controlling and predominant.

What is it that a man more naturally affects than society and converse ? It being a kind of multiplication of himself into every person of the company he converses with. And what by consequence can be more uneasy to this sociable creature than the dry, pensive retirements of solitude ? Nevertheless, when a nobler thing shall have seized his imagination, and his desires have took a flight above the first inclinations of his nature, by inspiring him with the diviner love of knowledge, or being serviceable to his country, why then he can with delight retreat into his cell, dwell with himself, and converse with his own thoughts, and in those higher speculations forget all his merry meetings and companions, nay, and his very food and rest, and live not only above the pleasures, but almost above the wants of nature too. Solomon tells us that " through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom." * So that it is this mighty thing desire which makes a man break off and sequester himself from all those jollities, those airy, empty diversions, which use to court and win the appetites of vulgar souls. Thus nature, we see, is forced to bend to art ; art is the daughter and issue of necessity ; and the standard and measure of this necessity is desire ; desire, which no-

* Prov. xviii. 1.

thing almost can withstand or set bounds to, which makes paths over the seas, turns the night into day, and, in a word, charges through hunger and poverty, and all those hardships which human nature is so apt to shrink under, but it will, at length, arrive at the satisfaction which it is in pursuit of.

What high and vast achievements does the apostle ascribe to faith,* as the subduing of kingdoms, stopping the mouths of lions, quenching the violence of fire, out of weakness making men strong, and that to such a degree as to endure tortures, cruel mockings, scourgings, bonds, and imprisonments, nay, and to be stoned, sawn asunder, and slain with the sword ! But how did faith do all this ? Why, in the strength of love ; faith being properly the eye of the soul to spy out and represent to it those excellent, amiable things the love and desire of which should be hotter than fire and stronger than death, bearing a man through and above all the terrors of both for the obtaining of so transcendent a good. In short, faith shows the soul its treasure, which, being once seen by it, naturally inflames the affections, and they as naturally engage all the faculties and powers of soul and body in a restless, indefatigable endeavour after it ; and thus, in all those heroic instances of passive fortitude, faith wrought by love, and therefore it wrought wonders.

ii. Whatsoever a man accounts his treasure, that he places his whole delight in ; it entertains his eye,

* Heb. xi.

refreshes his fancy, feeds his thoughts, and, next to his conscience, affords him a continual feast ; it fills and answers all his capacities of pleasure, and to please, we know, is much more than barely to support. It is the utmost limit of enjoyment, the most refined part of living, and, in a word, the last and highest thing which nature looks for. It quenches a man's thirst, not only as water, which just keeps nature alive, but as wine, which both sustains and gratifies it too, and adds a pleasure as well as serves a necessity.

Nothing has so strong and fast a hold upon the nature and mind of man as that which delights it ; for whatsoever a man delights to do, by his good will he would 'be always doing ; delight being that which perpetuates the union between the will and the object, and brings them together by the surest, the most voluntary and constant returns. And from hence, by the way, we may affirm it as a certain, unfailing truth, that no man ever was or can be considerable in any art or profession whatsoever which he does not take a particular delight in, for that otherwise he will never heartily and assiduously apply himself to it, nor is it morally possible that he should.

Men, indeed, in the course of this world are brought to do many things, mere necessity enforcing them, and the want and weakness of their condition creating that necessity ; but still, in all such cases, the man goes one way and his desires another, for he acts but as a slave under the eye of a severe master ; the dread

of some greater suffering making him submit to the disciplines of a less. But unshackle his nature and turn his desires loose, and then you shall see what he will choose in order to his pleasure and the free unrestrained enjoyment of himself; an epicure may be brought to confine himself to his chamber and take physic, as none generally need it more, but will he look upon the potion with the same eye with which he uses to see the wine sparkle in the glass? or rejoice in the company of his physician as much as in that of his boon companions? No, the actions of pleasure carry quite differing signs and marks upon them from such as are forced, marks above all the arts of dissimulation or the powers of compulsion; for, so far as anything pleases the heart, it commands it, and the command is absolute and the obedience cheerful.

iii. Whatsoever a man accounts his treasure, from that he derives the last support of his mind in all his troubles. Let an ambitious man lose his friends, his health, or his estate, yet, if the darling of his thoughts, his honour and his fame, continue entire, his spirit will still bear up. And let a voluptuous man be stripped of his credit and good name, his pleasures and sensuality, in the midst of all his disgrace, shall relieve him. And lastly, to name no more, let a covetous miser have both pleasure and honour taken from him, yet so long as his bags are full and the golden heaps glisten in his eyes, his other losses shall affect him

little ; they may raze the surface but they descend not into the vitals of his comforts.

The reason of all which is, because an ambitious person values honour, a voluptuous man pleasure, and a covetous wretch wealth, above any other enjoyment in the world. All other things are but tasteless and insipid to them in comparison of that one which is the sole minion of their fancy and the idol of their affections. And accordingly it would be found but a vain and fruitless attempt to go about to move the heart of any of these persons, but by touching upon the proper string that ties and holds it ; so that the way to humble and bring down an ambitious, aspiring man, is to disparage him, to expose and show his blind side, which such kind of persons never fail to have ; and the most effectual course to make a covetous man miserable, in the right sense, is to impoverish him. And when such a change of condition once passes upon such persons, they become like men without either life or spirit, the most pitiful, forlorn, abject creatures under heaven, and full of that complaint of Micah—"Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more?"* For whatsoever a man accounts his chief good, so as to suffer it to engross and take up all his desires, that he makes his god, that he deifies and adores, whether he knows so much or no. For certain it is that if he would lay out himself never so much in the acts of religion, he could do

* Judges xviii. 24.

no more, even to God himself, than love him, trust in him, and rely upon him, and, in a word, give him his heart; nor indeed does God require any more, for it is a man's all; take the heart, and you have the man by consequence. Govern the spring, and you command the motion. The whole man, as I may so express it, is but the appendix of his own heart.

iv. Whatsoever a man accounts his treasure, for the preservation of that he will part with all other things, if he cannot enjoy that and them together. See a merchant in a storm at sea, and what he values most he will be sure to throw overboard last; every man when he is exposed to any great and imminent danger, marshals his enjoyments just as Jacob did his family when he was to meet his brother Esau, whom he was in such fear of,* the handmaids and their children he put foremost; Leah and her children next; but Rachel and her children the hindermost of all; the reason of which was, because he had set his heart most upon her, and therefore would have her farthest from the danger, if it might be escaped, and last in the suffering, if it proved unavoidable. A father will be rather stripped of his estate than bereaved of his children, and if he cannot keep them all, he will, though with the loss of the rest, redeem the son of his affections.

It is possible indeed that a man himself may not always perfectly know what he loves most, till some

* Gen. xxxiii. 2.

notable trial comes which shall separate between him and what he has, and call for all his enjoyments one after another ; and then presently his eyes shall be opened, and he shall plainly find that the garment which sits nearest to him shall, by his good will, be last torn from him. Bring a man under persecution, and that shall tell him whether the peace of his conscience, or the security of his fortune, be the thing which he prefers and values most ; that shall tell him whether he had rather be plundered or perjured, and whether the guilt of rebellion and sacrilege does not strike a greater horror into him than all the miseries of an ejectionment or sequestration. But if, at the critical time of trial, such an one shall surrender up his conscience that he may continue warm in his house and his estate, let him no longer doubt what it is that is his treasure, and what lies deepest in his heart ; for it is that which he can most hardly be without. But his conscience, it seems, he can easily shake hands with, and therefore, wheresoever he may place his religion, it is certain that he places his happiness somewhere else.

Skin for skin, and all that a man has will he give for his life, commonly speaking ; but let a man love anything better than his life, and life itself shall be given for it. And the world has seen the experiment, for some have loved their country better than their lives, and accordingly have died for it ; and some their parents, some their honour, to that degree as to

sacrifice their dearest blood for the preservation of one and vindication of the other. But still, this is the sure, infallible test of love, that the measure of its strength is to be taken by the fastness of its hold. Benjamin was apparently dearest to his father because he was still kept with him, while the rest of his brethren were sent from him; he was to him as the apple of his eye, and therefore no wonder if he could not endure to have him out of it.

And thus I have done with the first consideration of the words, namely, as they are an entire proposition in themselves. I come now to the

II. As they are an argument relating to and enforcing of the foregoing precept, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust do corrupt, and thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust do corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*" The force of which argument is founded upon this clear and convincing ratiocination, to wit, that it is infinitely foolish and below a rational creature to place his heart upon that which is by no means worth the placing of his heart upon; and, therefore, since it is undeniably evident that a man will place his heart upon that which he makes his treasure, it follows that he cannot, without

* Ver. 19-21.

extreme folly, make anything his treasure which can neither be secured from rapine nor preserved from corruption, as it is certain that nothing in this world can.

This, I say, is the sum and force of our Saviour's argument. In pursuit of which, we are to observe that there are two things which offer themselves to mankind as rivals for their affections, to wit, God, and the world: the things of this present life, and of the future. And the whole strength of our Saviour's discourse bears upon this supposition—that it is impossible for a man to fix his heart upon both. No man can make religion his business and the world too; no man can have two chief goods. It is, indeed, more impossible than to serve two masters, forasmuch as the heart is more laid out upon what a man loves than upon what he serves. Besides that, the soul is but of a stinted operation, and cannot exert its full force and vigour upon two diverse, and much less contrary objects, for that one of them will be perpetually counterworking the other; and so far as the soul inclines to one, it must in proportion leave and go off from the other, so that an equal adhesion to them both implies in it a perfect contradiction. For why else should the word of truth so positively tell us that “if we love the world, the love of the Father is not, cannot be, in us”?* Men, I know, think to join both, but it is because they understand neither. For a

* 1 John ii. 15.

man must first have two hearts, and two souls, and two selves, before he can give a heart to God and a heart to the world too. And, therefore, Christ does not state this matter upon a bare priority of acquisition, as if he had bid men first lay up treasures for themselves in heaven, and after that allowed them with the same earnestness to provide themselves treasures here on earth likewise, and so by that means successively grasp the full happiness of both worlds, for he knew that the very nature of the thing itself made this impracticable and not to be effected, forasmuch as the acquisition of either world would certainly engage and take up the whole man, and, consequently, leave nothing of him to be employed about acquiring the other.

Whereupon Abraham, speaking to the rich man in the gospel,* who had flourished in his purple and fine linen, and fared deliciously every day, tells him that he, in his life-time, had received his good things. His they are called emphatically, his by peculiar choice. They were the things he chiefly valued and pitched upon as the most likely to make him happy; and, consequently, having actually enjoyed them, and thereby compassed the utmost of his desires, his happiness was at an end; he had his option, and there was no further provision for him in the other world; nor, indeed, was it possible that he should find any where he had laid up none. Those words of our

* Luke xvi. 19-31.

Saviour being most assuredly true, whether applied to men's endeavours after the things of this life, or of another, that "verily they have their reward;" that is to say, the result and issue of their labours will still be suitable to the end which governed and directed them; for where men sow they must expect to reap, it being infinitely absurd to bury their seed in the earth and to expect a crop in heaven. And, accordingly, in Hebrews xi. we find that at the same time the saints of old, there spoken of, declared themselves expectants of a land of promise hereafter, they also declared themselves strangers and pilgrims here. And therefore let not men mock and deceive themselves by thinking to compass heaven with one hand and earth with the other, and so to reign as princes in both, for the wisdom of God has decreed it otherwise, and judged one world enough for one man, though it gives him his choice of two.

It being clear, therefore, that a man cannot set his heart both upon God and the world too as his treasure or chief good, let us, in the next place, see which of these two bids highest for this great prize, the heart of man. And since there are but these two, there cannot be a more expedite way to evince that it belongs to God than by proving the absurdity of placing it upon the world, and that will appear upon a double account.

1. If we consider the world in comparison with the heart or mind of man.

2. If we consider it absolutely in itself.

1. If we consider it in comparison with the heart of man, we shall find that the heart has a superlative worth and excellency above anything in this world besides, and therefore ought by no means to be bestowed or laid out upon things so vastly inferior to itself, for it is that noble part of man which God has drawn and imprinted a lively portraiture of his own divine nature upon, that part which he has designed for his own peculiar use. For God made the heart for no other purpose but that he might dwell in it, giving us understandings able to pierce into and look through the fairest and most specious offers of this world, together with affections large enough to swallow and take down all that the whole creation can set before them, and yet remain hungry and unsatisfied still. And are such faculties as these, think we, fit to be entertained only with froth and wind, emptiness and delusion? And those things can be no more which are always promising satisfaction, but never give it. For surely such low enjoyments as meat, drink, and clothes, are not sufficient to satisfy or make a man happy; and yet all the necessities of the natural life are fully answered by these, and whatsoever upon that account is desired more, is but the result of a false appetite, founded in no real want, but only in fancy and opinion. Nevertheless, there are, I confess, spiritual wants which nothing can satisfy but what is supernatural.

And therefore the great and good God who gave us our very being, and so can need nothing that we either are or have, yet vouchsafes to solicit and even court our affections, and sets no other price upon heaven, glory, and immortality, nay, and upon himself too, but our love, there being nothing truly great and glorious which a creature is capable of enjoying but God is ready to give it a man in exchange for his heart.

How high is reason, and how strong is love! And surely God never gave the soul two such wings only that we might creep upon the ground, and place our heart and our foot upon the same level. Let the epicure, therefore, or voluptuous man, from amongst all his pleasures, single out that one which he reckons the best, the fullest, and most refined of all the rest, and offer it to his reason and affections, and see whether it can so acquit itself to the searching, impartial judgment of the one, and the unlimited appetite of the other, that when he shall have took his utmost fill of it, and gone off from the enjoyment, he shall be able to say, "Here have I found all the satisfaction that could be thought of or imagined," or his affections be able to tell him, "Here have we had all the sweetness that could be wished for or desired." But, on the contrary, do they not rather depart thirsty, and melancholy, and abashed with the present sense of their disappointment, and still casting about for something or other to piece up the flaws and defects of such

broken fruitions? So vast a difference is there in these matters between surfeit and satisfaction.

The heart of man is intimately conscious to itself of its own worth and prerogative, and therefore is never put to search for anything of enjoyment here below but it does it with a secret regret and disdain, scorn and indignation, like a prince imprisoned and forced to be ruled and fed by his own subjects ; for so it is with that divine being, the soul, while depressed by the body to a condition so much below itself.

But God sent not man into the world with such mighty endowments so much to enjoy it as to have the honour of despising it, and upon a full experience of its woful vanity to find cause in all his thoughts and desires to return and fly back to his Maker, like the dove to the ark when it could rest nowhere else.

2. We are to consider the world absolutely in itself; and so we shall find the most valued enjoyments of it embased by these two qualifications: *first*, that they are perishing; and, *second*, that they are out of our power. One of them expressed by moths and rust corrupting them; and the other by thieves breaking through and stealing them. The first representing them as subject to decay from a principle within; the second as liable to be forced from us by a violence from without; and so, upon both accounts, utterly unable to make men happy, and consequently unworthy to take possession of their hearts.

And, *first*, for the perishing state and quality of all

these worldly enjoyments. A thing so evident, or rather obvious, to common sense and experience, that no man in his right wits can really doubt of it, and yet so universally contradicted by men's practice, that scarce any man seems to believe it. No ; though the Spirit of God in Scripture is as full and home in the character it gives of these things as experience itself can be, sometimes expressing them by fashions, which, we know, are always changing, and sometimes by shadows, which no man can take any hold of, and sometimes by dreams, which are all mockery and delusion, thus degrading the most admired grandeurs of the world from realities to bare appearances, and from appearances to mere nothings.

Nor do they fail only, and lose that little worth they have, but they do it also by the vilest and most contemptible things in nature—by rust and cankers, moths and vermin, things which grow out of the very subject they destroy, and so make the destruction of it inevitable. And how can any better be expected, when men will rather dig their treasure and comforts from beneath, than fetch them from above ? For it is impossible for such mortals to put on immortality, or for things, in the very nature of them calculated but for a few days, to last for ever. All sublunary comforts imitate the changeableness, as well as feel the influence of the planet they are under. Time, like a river, carries them all away with a rapid course ; they swim above the stream for awhile, but are quickly swal-

lowed up and seen no more. The very monuments men raise to perpetuate their names, consume and moulder away themselves, and proclaim their own mortality as well as testify that of others. In a word, all these earthly funds have deficiencies in them never to be made up.

But now, on the other side, the enjoyments above, and the treasures proposed to us by our Saviour, are indefectible in their nature and endless in their duration. They are still full, fresh, and entire, like the stars and orbs above, which shine with the same undiminished lustre, and move with the same unwearied motion with which they did from the first date of their creation. Nay, the joys of heaven will abide when these lights of heaven shall be put out, and when the sun and moon, and nature itself, shall be discharged their stations and be employed by Providence no more ; the righteous shall then appear in their full glory, and, being fixed in the Divine presence, enjoy one perpetual and everlasting day, a day commensurate to the unlimited eternity of God himself, the great Sun of righteousness, who is always rising and never sets.

The other degrading qualification of these worldly enjoyments is, that they are out of our power. And, surely, that is very unfit for a man to account his treasure which he cannot so much as call his own, nor extend his title to so far as the very next minute ; as having no command nor hold of it at all beyond the pre-

sent actual possession : and the compass of the present, all know, is but one remove from nothing. A rich man to-day and a beggar to-morrow, is neither new nor wonderful in the experience of the world ; for he who is rich now must ask the rapacity of thieves, pirates, and tyrants how long he shall continue so, and rest content to be happy for just so much time as the pride and violence, the cruelty and avarice of the worst of men shall permit him to be so ; a comfortable tenure, doubtless, for a man to hold his chief happiness by.

But now, on the contrary, nothing is so absolutely and essentially necessary to render anything a man's treasure or chief good as that he have a property in it and a power over it ; without which it will be impossible for him to be sure of any relief from it when he shall most need it : for how can he be sure of that of which he has no command ? And how can he command that which a greater force than his own shall lay claim to ? For let those puny things called law and right say what they will to the contrary, if the matter comes once to a dispute, all the good things a man has of this world will be his who has the strongest arm and the sharpest sword, or the corruptest judge on his side. They are the prey of the mighty, and the prize of victorious villany, subject to be torn and ravished from him upon all occasions.

Nor has the providence of God thought it worth while to secure and protect the very best of men in

their rights to any enjoyment under heaven ; and all this to depress and vilify these things in their thoughts, that so they may every day find a necessity of placing them above, and of bestowing their pains upon that which, if they pursue, they shall certainly obtain, and if they obtain they shall impregnably keep. "My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you," says our Saviour, "not as the world giveth, give I unto you." Why? What was the difference? He tells us, "Your joy no man taketh from you."* It was such a joy or peace as was to be above the reach of either fraud or force, artifice or assault ; which can never be said of any earthly enjoyment whatsoever, either as to the acquisition or possession of it, God having made no man any promise that by all his virtue and innocence, all his skill and industry, he shall be able to continue in health, wealth, or honour ; but that, after his utmost endeavour to preserve those desirable things, he may, in the issue, lose them all.

But God has promised and engaged to mankind, that whosoever shall faithfully and constantly persevere in the duties of a pious Christian life, shall obtain an eternal crown of glory and an inheritance that fadeth not away. A man cannot, indeed, by all his piety secure his estate, but he may make his calling and election sure, which is infinitely and unspeakably more valuable than all the estates, pleasures, and greatness of the world. For all these are without

* John xvi. 22.

him, and, consequently, may be taken from him, and, which is yet worse, may do him no good, even while they stay with him. But the conscience is a sure repository for a man to lodge and preserve his treasure in, and the chest of his own heart can never be forced open.

Now, the use and improvement of the foregoing particulars shall be briefly to convince us of the extreme vanity of most men's pretences to religion. A man's religion is all the claim he has to the felicities of another world. But can we think it possible in nature for a man to place his greatest happiness where he does not place his strongest affections! How little is the other world in most men's thoughts, and yet they can have the confidence to pretend it to be the grand object of their desires! But why should men, in their greatest concern, be so false to their own experience and those constant observations which they make of themselves in other matters? For, let any one consult and ask his own heart whether, having once fixed his love upon any thing or person, his thoughts are not always running after it? Strong love is a bias upon the thoughts; and for a man to love earnestly and not to think almost continually of what he loves, is as impossible as for him to live and not to breathe.

But, besides this, we have shown several other marks and properties by which men may infallibly

judge of the truth and firmness of their love to God and to religion ; as, for instance, can they affirm religion to be that which has such hold of their hearts that no time, cost, or labour shall be thought too much to be laid out upon it ? Is it the prize they run for ? Is it the thing they delight in ? The thing with which, in all their distresses, they support and keep up their sinking spirits ? And, lastly, is it that which they value to such a degree as to be willing to part with all the world rather than lose or renounce it ? These are great things, I confess, and yet nothing less will reach the measures of Christianity.

But the lives of men (unanswerable arguments in this case) are a sad demonstration how few they are who come up to these terms. Men may, indeed, now and then bestow some scattering thoughts upon their souls and their future estate, provided they be at full leisure from their business and their sports, which they seldom or never are ; and if at any time they should be so, this could amount to no more than their being religious when they have nothing else to do. Likewise, when the solemn returns of God's public worship, and the law and custom of the nation, shall call them off from their daily employments to better things, they may perhaps, by a few devout looks and words, put on something of a holy-day dress for the present, which yet, like their Sunday clothes, they are sure to lay aside again for the whole week after. All which, and a great deal more, is far short of making

religion a man's business, though yet if it be not so, it is in effect nothing.

And this men know well enough when they are to deal in matters of this world, in which no pains nor importunity shall be thought too great, no attendance too servile, nothing, in a word, too hard to be done or suffered, either to recruit a broken fortune or to regain a disgusted friend ; though, after all, should a man chance to recover both, he cannot be sure of keeping either. In like manner let the trading person suffer any considerable damage in the stock with which he trades ; what care, what parsimony, what art shall be used to make up the breach, and keep the shop still open ? And the reason of all this is, because the man is in earnest in what he does, and accordingly acts as one who is so. Whereas in men's spiritual affairs, look all the world over, and you shall every day see that the sins which wound and waste, and make havoc of the conscience, which divide and cut it off from God, are committed easily, and passed over lightly, and owned confidently ; with a bold front and a brazen face, able to look the pillory itself out of countenance ; nor does any one, almost, think himself so mortally struck, even by the foulest guilt, as to need the balsam of an immediate repentance, and a present suing out of pardon at the throne of grace. And yet, if a man dies, as to his temporal condition, poor and bankrupt, he is not at all the worse ; but if he goes out of the world unreconciled to God, it had

been good for him that he had never come into it ; for what can it avail a man to pass from misery to misery, and to make one wretched life only a preparative to another ?

In fine, this we may with great boldness venture to affirm, that if men would be at half the pains to provide themselves treasures in heaven, which they are generally at to get estates here on earth, it were impossible for any man to be damned. But when we come to earthly matters, we do ; when to heavenly, we only discourse ; heaven has our tongue and talk, but the earth our whole man besides.

Nevertheless, let men rest assured of this, that God has so ordered the great business of their eternal happiness, that their affections must still be the forerunners of their persons, the constant harbingers appointed by God to go and take possession of those glorious mansions for them ; and consequently, that no man shall ever come to heaven himself who has not sent his heart thither before him. For where this leads the way, the other will be sure to follow.

MISCELLANEOUS EXTRACTS.

Special Preparation for the Lord's Supper.

A PREPARATION is necessary. And this is a subject which I am heartily sorry that any preacher should find it needful to speak so much as one word upon. For would any man in his wits venture to die without preparation? And if not, let me tell you that nothing less than that which will fit a man for death can fit him for the sacrament. There is nothing great or considerable in the world which ought to be done or ventured upon without preparation; but, above all, how dangerous, sottish, and irrational is it to engage in anything or action extempore where the concern is eternity?

None but the careless and the confident would rush rudely into the presence of a great man. And shall we, in our applications to the great God, take that to be religion which the common reason of mankind will not allow to be manners? The very rules of worldly civility might instruct men how to order their addresses to God. For who that is to appear before his

prince or patron would not view and review himself over and over with all imaginable care and solicitude that there be nothing justly offensive in his habit, language, or behaviour? But especially if he be vouchsafed the honour of his table, it would be infinitely more absurd and shameful to appear foul and sordid there, and in the dress of the kitchen receive the entertainments of the parlour.

What previous cleansings and consecrations, and what peculiar vestments, were the priests, under the law, enjoined to use when they were to appear before God in the sanctuary! And all this upon no less a penalty than death. This and this they were to do, lest they died, lest God should strike them dead upon the spot, as we read in Levit. viii. 35, and in many other places in the books of Moses.

Nay, and the heathens, many of them, at least, when they were to sacrifice to their greatest and most revered deities, used, on the evening before, to have a certain preparative rite or ceremony. And what were all their lustrations but so many solemn purifyings, to render both themselves and their sacrifices acceptable to their gods?

So that we see here a concurrence both of the Jews and heathens in this practice before Christianity ever appeared, which to me is a kind of demonstration that the necessity of men's preparing themselves for the sacred offices of religion was a lesson which the mere light and dictates of common reason, without

the help of revelation, taught all the knowing and intelligent part of the world.

"I will wash my hands in innocency (says David), and so will I compass thine altar."* And as the apostle told the Hebrews,† we also, we Christians, have an altar as well as they ; an altar as sacred, an altar to be approached with as much awe and reverence ; and though there be no fire upon it, yet there is a dreadful one that follows it ; a fire that does not indeed consume the offering, but such an one as will be sure to seize and prey upon the unworthy offerer. "I will be sanctified (says God) in them that come nigh me."‡ And God then accounts himself sanctified in such persons when they sanctify themselves. Nadab and Abihu were a dreadful exposition of this text.

And for what concerns ourselves, he that shall thoroughly consider what the heart of man is, what sin and the world is, and what it is to approve one's self to an all-searching eye in so sublime a duty as the sacrament, must acknowledge that a man may as well go about it without a soul as without preparation.

For the holiest man living, by conversing with the world, insensibly draws something of soil and taint from it : the very air and mien, the way and business of the world still, as it were, rubbing something upon the soul which must be fetched off again before it can

* Psa. xxvi. 6.

† Heb. xiii. 10.

‡ Lev. x. 3.

heartily converse with God. Many secret indispositions, coldnesses, and aversions to duty, will undiscernibly steal upon it, and it will require both time and close application of mind to recover it to such a frame as shall dispose and fit it for the spiritualities of religion.

And such as have made trial, find it neither so easy nor so ready a passage from the noise, the din, and hurry of business, to the retirements of devotion; from the exchange to the closet, and from the freedoms of conversation to the recollections and disciplines of the spirit.

The Jews, as soon as they came from markets, or any other such promiscuous resorts, would be sure to use accurate and more than ordinary washings. And had their washings soaked through the body into the soul, and had not their inside reproached their outside, I see nothing in this custom but what was allowable enough, and very commendable. Nevertheless, whatsoever it might have in it peculiar to the genius of that nation, the spiritual use and improvement of it, I am sure, may very well reach the best of us. So that if the Jews thought this practice requisite before they sat down to their own tables, let us Christians think it absolutely necessary when we come to God's table not to eat till we have washed. And when I have said so, I suppose I need not add that our washing is to be like our eating, both of them spiritual; that we are to carry it from the hand to the heart, to

improve a ceremonial nicety into a substantial duty, and the modes of civility into the realities of religion.

But then every preparation is not sufficient. It must be a suitable preparation ; none but a wedding garment will serve the turn, a garment as much fitted to the solemnity as to the body itself that wears it.

Now all fitness lies in a particular commensuration or proportion of one thing to another, and that such an one as is founded in the very nature of things themselves, and not in the opinions of men concerning them. And for this cause it is that the soul, no less than the body, must have its several distinct postures and dispositions, fitting it for several distinct offices and performances. And as no man comes with folded arms to fight or wrestle, nor prepares himself for the battle as he would compose himself to sleep, so upon a true estimate of things it will be found every whit as absurd and irrational for a man to discharge the most extraordinary duty of his religion at the rate of an ordinary devotion ; for this is really a paradox in practice, and men may sometimes do as well as speak contradictions.

There is a great festival now drawing on ; * a festival designed chiefly for the act of a joyful piety, but generally made only an occasion of bravery. I shall say no more of it at present but this—that God expects from men something more than ordinary at such times, and that it were much to be wished, for the cre-

* The sermon was preached on Palm Sunday.

dit of their religion, as well as the satisfaction of their consciences, that their Easter devotions would, in some measure, come up to their Easter dress.

Now that our preparation may answer the important work and duty which we are to engage in, these two conditions, or qualifications, are required in it : 1. That it be habitual. 2. That it be also actual.

And, *first*, for *habitual preparation*. This consists in a standing, permanent habit, or principle of holiness, wrought chiefly by God's Spirit, and instrumentally by his word, in the heart or soul of man ; such a principle as is called both by our Saviour and his apostles, the new birth, the new man, the immortal seed, and the like, and by which a man is so universally changed and transformed in the whole frame and temper of his soul as to have a new judgment and sense of things, new desires, new appetites and inclinations.

And this is first produced in him by that mighty spiritual change which we call conversion, which, being so rarely and seldom found in the hearts of men, even where it is most pretended to, is but too full and sad a demonstration of the truth of that terrible saying—that few are chosen, and consequently but few saved ; for who almost is there of whom we can with any rational assurance, or perhaps so much as likelihood, affirm, here is a man whose nature is renewed, whose heart is changed, and the stream of whose appetites is so turned that he does with as high

and quick a relish taste the ways of duty, holiness, and strict living as others, or as he himself, before this, grasped at the most enamouring proposals of sin ; who almost, I say, is there who can reach and verify the height of this character ? And yet without which the Scripture absolutely affirms that a man cannot see the kingdom of God.*

For let preachers say and suggest what they will, custom generally is too hard for conscience, in spite of all its convictions. Possibly sometimes, in hearing or reading the word, the conscience may be alarmed, the affections warmed, good desires begin to kindle, and to form themselves into some degrees of resolution, but the heart remaining all the time unchanged ; as soon as men slide into the common course and converse of the world, all those resolutions and convictions quickly cool and languish, and after a few days are dismissed as troublesome companions. But assuredly no man was ever made a true convert or a new creature at so easy a rate ; sin was never dispossessed nor holiness introduced by such feeble, vanishing impressions. Nothing under a total, thorough change will suffice ; neither tears nor trouble of mind, neither good desires nor intentions, nor yet the relinquishment of some sins nor the performance of some good works, will avail anything, but a new creature ; a word that comprehends more in it than words can well express, and perhaps after

* John iii. 3.

all that can be said of it, never thoroughly to be understood by what a man hears from others, but by what he must feel within himself.

And now that this is required as the groundwork of all our preparations for the sacrament, is evident from hence, because this sacrament is not first designed to make us holy, but rather supposes us to be so ; it is not a converting, but a confirming ordinance. Upon which account, according to the true nature and intent of this sacrament, men should not expect life, but growth from it ; and see that there be something to be fed before they seek out for provision ; for the truth is, for any one who is not passed from death to life, and has not in him that new living principle which we have been hitherto speaking of, to come to this spiritual repast is, upon the matter, as absurd and preposterous as if he who makes a feast should send to the graves and the churchyards for guests, or entertain and treat a corpse at a banquet.

Let men therefore consider before they come hither, whether they have anything besides the name they received in baptism to prove their Christianity by. Let them consider whether the converting grace of God has formed in them a new nature, such an one as exerts and shows itself by the sure, infallible effects of a good life ; such an one as enables them to reject and trample upon all the alluring offers of the world, the flesh, and the devil, so as not to be conquered or enslaved by them, and to choose the hard

and rugged paths of duty rather than the easy and voluptuous ways of sin, which every Christian, by the very nature of his religion, as well as by his baptismal vow, is strictly obliged to do. And if upon an impartial survey of themselves men find that no such change has passed upon them, either let them prove that they may be Christians upon easier terms, or have a care how they intrude upon so great and holy an ordinance, in which God is so seldom mocked but it is to the mocker's confusion. And thus much for habitual preparation. But,

Secondly. Over and above this there is required also an *actual preparation*, which is, as it were, the furbishing or rubbing up of the former habitual principle.

We have both of them excellently described in the parable of the ten virgins,* of which the five wise are said to have had oil in their lamps; yet, notwithstanding that, midnight and weariness was too hard for them, and they all slumbered and slept, and their lamps cast but a dim and a feeble light till the bridegroom's approach, but then, upon the first alarm of that, they quickly rose and trimmed their lamps, and without either trimming or painting themselves, being as much too wise as some should be too old for such follies, they presently put themselves into a readiness to receive their surprising guest. Where, by their having oil in their lamps, no doubt, must be understood a principle of grace infused into their hearts, or

* Matt. xxv.

the new nature formed within them ; and by their trimming their lamps must be meant their actual exercise and improvement of that standing principle in the particular instances of duty suitable and appropriate to the grand solemnity of the bridegroom's reception. In like manner, when a man comes to this sacrament, it is not enough that he has an habitual stock of grace, that he has the immortal seed of a living faith sown in his heart. This indeed is necessary, but not sufficient ; his faith must be not only living, but lively too ; it must be brightened and stirred up, and, as it were, put into a posture by a particular exercise of those several virtues that are specially requisite to a due performance of this duty. Habitual grace is the life, and actual grace the beauty and ornament of the soul ; and therefore let people in this high and great concern be but so just to their souls as, in one much less, they never fail to be to their bodies, in which the greatest advantages of natural beauty make none think the further advantage of a decent dress superfluous.

Nor is it at all strange, if we look into the reason of things, that a man, habitually good and pious, should, at some certain turns and times of his life, be at a loss how to exert the highest acts of that habitual principle. For no creature is perfect and pure act, especially a creature so compounded of soul and body that body seems much the stronger part in the composition.

Common experience shows that the wisest of men

are not always fit and disposed to act wisely, nor the most admired speakers to speak eloquently and exactly. They have indeed an acquired standing ability of wisdom and eloquence within them, which gives them an habitual sufficiency for such performances. But, for all that, if the deepest statesman should presume to go to council immediately from his cups, or the ablest preacher think himself fitted to preach only by stepping up to the pulpit, notwithstanding the policy of one and the eloquence of the other, they may chance to get the just character of bold fools for venturing, whatsoever good fortune may bring them off.

And therefore the most active powers and faculties of the mind require something besides themselves to raise them to the full height of their natural activity; something to excite and quicken and draw them forth into immediate action. And this holds proportionably in all things animate or inanimate in the world.

But the case is much the same in spirituals: for grace in the soul, while the soul is in the body, will always have the ill neighbourhood of some remainders of corruption, which, though they do not conquer and extinguish, yet will be sure to slacken and allay the vigour and briskness of the renewed principle; so that when this principle is to engage in any great duty, it will need the actual intention, the particular stress and application of the whole soul, to disencumber and set it free, to scour off its rust, and remove those hin-

drances which would otherwise clog and check the freedom of its operations.

And thus having shown that to fit us for a due access to the holy sacrament we must add actual preparation to habitual, I shall now endeavour to show several parts or ingredients of which this actual preparation must consist.

And here I shall not pretend to give an account of every particular duty that may be useful for this purpose, but shall only mention some of the principal, and such as may most peculiarly contribute towards it.

Let a man apply himself to the great and difficult work of self-examination by a strict scrutiny into, and survey of the whole estate of his soul, according to that known and excellent rule of the apostle in the very case now before us : " Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread."* If a man would have such a wedding garment as may fit him exactly, let self-examination take the measure. A duty of so mighty an influence upon all that concerns the soul, that it is indeed the very root and ground-work of all true repentance, and the necessary antecedent, if not also the direct cause of a sinner's return to God.

For as there are some sins which require a particular and distinct repentance by themselves, and cannot be accounted for in the general heap of sins, known and unknown, so how is it possible for a man

* 1 Cor. ii. 28.

to repent rightly of such sins unless by a thorough search into the nature, number, and distinguishing circumstances of them, he comes to see how and in what degree they are to be repented of?

But the sovereign excellency and necessity of this duty needs no other nor greater proof of it than this one consideration, that nothing in nature can be more grievous and offensive to a sinner than to look into himself, and generally what grace requires, nature is most averse to. It is indeed as offensive as to rake into a dunghill, as grievous as for one to read over his debts when he is not able to pay them, or for a bankrupt to examine and look into his accounts, which at the same time that they acquaint must needs also upbraid him with his condition.

But as irksome as the work is, it is absolutely necessary. Nothing can well be imagined more painful than to probe and search a purulent old sore to the bottom, but for all that the pain must be endured or no cure expected. And men certainly have sunk their reason to very gross, low, and absurd conceptions of God, when in the matter of sin they can make such false and short reckonings with him and their own hearts; for can they imagine that God has therefore forgot their sins because they are not willing to remember them? or, will they measure his pardon by their own oblivion? What pitiful fig-leaves, what senseless and ridiculous shifts are these, not able to silence and much less satisfy an accusing conscience!

But now, for the better management of this examination of our past lives, we must thoroughly canvass them with these and the like questions.

As, for instance, let a man enquire what sins he has committed, and what breaches he has made upon those two great standing rules of duty—the Decalogue, and our Saviour's divine sermon upon the mount. Let him enquire also what particular aggravations lie upon his sins ; as whether they have not been committed against strong reluctancy and light of conscience, after many winning calls of mercy to reclaim, and many terrible warnings of judgment to affright him ; whether resolutions, vows, and protestations have not been made against them ; whether they have not been repeated frequently and persisted in obstinately ; and lastly, whether the same appetites to sin have not remained as active and unmortified after sacraments as ever they had been before.

How important these considerations and heads of enquiry are, all who understand anything will easily perceive. For this we must know, that the very same sin, as to the nature of it, stamped with any one of these aggravations, is, in effect, not the same ; and he who has sinned the same great sin after several times receiving the sacrament, must not think that God will accept him without greater repentance and contrition for it than he brought with him to that duty formerly. Whether God by his grace will enable him to rise up to such a pitch or no, is uncertain ; but most

certain that both his work is harder and his danger greater than it was or could be at the first.

When a man has by such a close and rigorous examination of himself found out the accursed thing and discovered his sin, the next thing in order must be to work up his heart to the utmost hatred of it, and the bitterest sorrow and remorse for it. For self-examination having first presented it to the thoughts, these naturally transmit and hand it over to the passions, and this introduces the next ingredient of our sacramental preparations, to wit, repentance ; which arduous work I suppose not now to begin, but to be renewed, and that with special reference to sins not repented of before, and yet more especially to those new scores which we still have run ourselves upon since the last preceding sacrament ; which method, faithfully and constantly observed, must needs have an admirable and mighty effect upon the conscience, and keep a man from breaking or running behind hand in his spiritual estate, which, without frequent accountings, he will hardly be able to prevent.

But because this is a duty of such high consequence, I would by all means warn men of one very common and yet very dangerous mistake about it, and that is, the taking of mere sorrow for sin for repentance. It is indeed a good introduction to it, but the porch, though never so fair and spacious, is not the house itself. Nothing passes in the accounts of God for repentance but change of life ; ceasing to do evil, and

doing good, are the two great integral parts that complete this duty. For not to do evil is much better than the sharpest sorrow for having done it, and to do good is better and more valuable than both.

When a man has found out sin in his actions, let him resolutely arrest it there; but let him also pursue it home to his inclinations, and dislodge it thence, otherwise it will be all to little purpose, for, the root being still left behind, it is odds but in time it will shoot out again.

Men befool themselves infinitely when by venting a few sighs or groans, putting the finger in the eye and whimpering out a few melancholy words, and lastly, concluding all with, "I wish I had never done so," and "I am resolved never to do so more," they will needs persuade themselves that they have repented, though perhaps, in this very thing, their heart all the while deceives them, and they neither really wish the one nor resolve the other.

But whether they do or no, all true, penitential sorrow will and must proceed much further. It must force and make its way into the very inmost corners and recesses of the soul; it must shake all the powers of sin, producing in the heart strong and lasting aversions to evil, and equal dispositions to good, which, I must confess, are great things; but if the sorrow which we have been speaking of carry us not so far, let it express itself never so loudly and passionately, and discharge itself in never so many showers of tears

and volleys of sighs, yet, by all this, it will no more purge a man's heart than the washing of his hands can cleanse the rottenness of his bones.

When self-examination has both shown us our sin, and repentance has disowned and cast it out, the next thing naturally consequent upon this is, with the highest importunity to supplicate God's pardon for the guilt, and his grace against the power of it. And this brings in prayer as a third preparative for the sacrament, a duty upon which all the blessings of both worlds are entailed; a duty appointed by God himself as the great conduit and noble instrument of commerce between heaven and earth; a duty founded on man's essential dependence upon God, and so, in the ground and reason of it, perpetual, and consequently, in the practice of it, indispensable.

But I shall speak of it now only with reference to the sacrament; and so, whatsoever other graces may furnish us with a wedding garment, it is certain that prayer must put it on. Prayer is that by which a man engages all the auxiliaries of Omnipotence itself against his sin, and is so utterly contrary to and inconsistent with it, that the same heart cannot long hold them both, but one must soon quit possession of it to the other, and either praying make a man leave off sinning, or sinning force him to give over praying.

Every real act of hatred of sin is, in the very nature of the thing, a partial mortification of it; and it is hardly possible for a man to pray heartily against his

sin but he must at the same time hate it too. I know a man may think that he hates his sin when indeed he does not ; but then it is also as true that he does not sincerely pray against it, whatsoever he may imagine.

Besides, since the very life and spirit of prayer consists in an ardent, vehement desire of the thing prayed for, and since the nature of the soul is such that it strangely symbolises with the thing it mightily desires, it is evident that if a man would have a devout, humble, sin-aborring, self-denying frame of spirit, he cannot take a more efficacious course to attain it than by praying himself into it. And so close a connection has this duty with the sacrament, that whatsoever we receive in the sacrament is properly in answer to our prayers. And consequently, we may with great assurance conclude, that he who is not frequently upon his knees before he comes to that holy table, kneels to very little purpose when he is there.

Idolatry: in what it consists.

I know no place from which we may more clearly gather what the Scripture accounts idolatry than from this chapter.* From whence, that I may represent to you what idolatry is, and wherein one sort of it, at least, does consist, you may observe that the persons who are here charged with it are positively affirmed to

* Rom. i.

have known and acknowledged the true God ; for it is said of them that they knew his eternal power and Godhead in this 20th verse, nay, and they worshipped him too. From whence this undeniably and invincibly follows, that they did not look upon those images which they addressed as gods, nor as things in which the Divine nature did or could enclose itself, nor, consequently, to which they gave or ultimately designed their religious worship. This conclusion, therefore, I infer and assert, that idolatry is not only an accounting or worshipping that for God which is not God, but it is also a worshipping the true God in a way wholly unsuitable to his nature, and particularly by the mediation of images and corporeal resemblances of him. This is idolatry. For the persons here spoken of pretended to glorify the true God, but they did not glorify him as God, and upon that account stand arraigned for idolaters. Common sense and experience will and must evince the truth of this. For can any one imagine that men of reason, who had their senses quick and their wits and discourse entire, could take that image or statue which they fell down before to be a god ? Could they think that to be infinite and immense the ubiquity of which they could thrust into a corner of their closet ? Or could they conceive that to be eternal which a few days before they had seen a log, or a rude trunk, and perhaps the other piece of it a joint stool in the workman's shop ?

The ground and reason of all worship is an opinion of power and will in the person worshipped to answer and supply our desires, which he cannot possibly do unless he first apprehend them. But can any man, who is master of sense himself, believe the rational heathens so void of it as to think that those images could fulfil the petitions which they could not hear, pity the wants they could not see, do all things when they could not stir a hand or a foot? It is impossible they should; but it is also certain that they were idolaters. And, therefore, it is clear that their idolatry consisted in something else, and the history of it would demonstrate so much, were it proper to turn a sermon into a history. So that we see here that the sin condemned in the text was the worshipping of the true God by images; for the defence of which there is no doubt but that they might have pleaded, and did plead for those images, that they used them not as objects, but only as means and instruments of Divine worship, not as what they worshipped, but as that by which they directed their worship to God. Though still, methinks, it is something hard to conceive that none of the worship should fall upon the image by the way, or that the water can be conveyed into the sea without so much as wetting the channel through which it passes. But, however, you see it requires a very distinguishing head, and an even hand, and no small skill in directing the attention, to carry a prayer quite through to

its journey's end ; though, after all, the mischief of it is, that the distinction which looks so fine in theory generally miscarries in the practice, especially where the ignorant vulgar are the practisers, who are the worst in the world at distinguishing, but yet make far the greatest part of mankind, and are as much concerned and obliged to pray as the wisest and the best ; but withal infinitely unhappy if they cannot perform a necessary duty without school distinctions, nor beg their daily bread without metaphysics.

On taking Pleasure in other Men's Sins.

One cause of men's taking pleasure in the sins of others is from that meanness and poor-spiritedness that naturally and inseparably accompanies all guilt. Whosoever is conscious to himself of sin, feels in himself, whether he will own it or no, a proportionable shame and a secret depression of spirit thereupon. And this is so irksome and uneasy to man's mind, that he is restless to relieve and rid himself from it, for which he finds no way so effectual as to get company in the same sin ; for company in any action gives both credit to that and countenance to the agent ; and so much as the sinner gets of this, so much he casts off of shame. Singularity in sin puts it out of fashion, since to be alone in any practice seems to make the judgment of the world against it, but the concurrence of others is a tacit approbation of that in which they

concur. Solitude is a kind of nakedness, and the result of that, we know, is shame. It is company only that can bear a man out in an ill thing ; and he who is to encounter and fight the law will be sure to need a second. No wonder, therefore, if some take delight in the immoralities and baseness of others, for nothing can support their minds, drooping, and sneaking, and inwardly reproaching them from a sense of their own guilt, but to see others as bad as themselves.

To be vicious amongst the virtuous is a double disgrace and misery ; but where the whole company is vicious and debauched, they presently like, or at least easily pardon one another. And as it is observed by some that there is none so homely but loves a looking-glass, so it is certain that there is no man so vicious but delights to see the image of his vice reflected upon him from one who exceeds, or at least equals him in the same.

Sin in itself is not only shameful, but also weak ; and it seeks a remedy for both in society, for it is this that must give it both colour and support. But, on the contrary, how great and, as I may so speak, how self-sufficient a thing is virtue ! It needs no credit from abroad, no countenance from the multitude. Were there but one virtuous man in the world, he would hold up his head with confidence and honour ; he would shame the world, and not the world him ; for according to that excellent and great saying, “ A

good man shall be satisfied from himself." * He needs look no further. But if he desires to see the same virtue propagated and diffused to those about him, it is for their sakes, not his own. It is his charity that wishes, and not his necessity that requires it ; for solitude and singularity can neither daunt nor disgrace him, unless we could suppose it a disgrace for a man to be singularly good.

But a vicious person, like the basest sort of beasts, never enjoys himself but in the herd. Company, he thinks, lessens the shame of vice by sharing it, and abates the torrent of a common odium by deriving it into many channels ; and therefore, if he cannot wholly avoid the eye of the observer, he hopes to distract it at least by a multiplicity of the object. These, I confess, are poor shifts and miserable shelters for a sick and a self-upbraiding conscience to fly to ; and yet they are some of the best that the debauchee has to cheer up his spirits with in this world ; for if, after all, he must needs be seen and took notice of, with all his filth and noisomeness about him, he promises himself however that it will be some allay to his reproach to be but one of many to march in a troop, and, by a preposterous kind of ambition, to be seen in bad company.

What to pray for.

The things that we are to pray for are either (1)

* Prov. xiv. 14.

things of absolute necessity, or (2) things of unquestionable charity. Of the first sort are all spiritual graces required in us, as the indispensable conditions of our salvation, such as are repentance, faith, hope, charity, temperance, and all other virtues that are either the parts or principles of a pious life. These are to be the prime subject matter of our prayers, and we shall find that nothing comes this way so easily from heaven as those things that will assuredly bring us to it. The Spirit dictates all such petitions, and God himself is first the author and then the fulfiller of them, owning and accepting them both as our duty and his own production.

The other sort of things that may allowably be prayed for are things of manifest, unquestionable charity, such as are a competent measure of the innocent comforts of life, as health, peace, maintenance, and a success of our honest labours; and yet even these but conditionally, and with perfect resignation to the will and wisdom of the Sovereign Disposer of all that belongs to us, who, if he finds it more for his honour to have us serve him with sick, crazy, languishing bodies, with poverty and extreme want of all things, ought in all this, and much more, to overrule our prayers and desires into an absolute acquiescence in his all-wise disposal of things, and to convince us that our prayers are sometimes best answered when our desires are most opposed.

In fine—to state the whole matter of our prayers

in one word—nothing can be fit for us to pray for but what is fit and honourable for our great Mediator and Master of requests, Jesus Christ himself, to intercede for. This is to be the unchangeable rule and measure of all our petitions. And then, if Christ is to convey these our petitions to his Father, can any one dare to make Him who was holiness and purity itself an advocate and solicitor for his lusts? Him who was nothing but meekness, lowliness, and humility, his provider for such things as can only feed his pride and flush his ambition? No, certainly; when we come as suppliants to the throne of grace, where Christ sits as Intercessor at God's right hand, nothing can be fit to proceed out of our mouth but what is fit to pass through his.

The Folly of postponing Repentance.

And therefore let not men flatter themselves, as no doubt some do, that though they find it difficult at present to combat and stand out against an ill practice, and, upon that account, give way to a continuance in it, yet that old age shall do that for them which they in their youth could never find in their heart to do for themselves; I say, let not such persons mock and abuse themselves with such false and absurd presumptions; for they must know that a habit may continue when it is no longer able to act, or rather the internal acts of it may be quick and

vigorous when the external acts of the same habit utterly cease.

Let men but reflect upon their own observation, and consider impartially with themselves how few in the world they have known made better by age. Generally they will see that such leave not their vice, but their vice leaves them, or rather retreats from their practices, and retires into their fancy, and that we know is boundless and infinite ; and when vice has once settled itself there it finds a vaster and a wider compass to act in than ever it had before. I scarce know anything that calls for a more serious consideration from us than this ; for still men are apt to persuade themselves that they shall find it an easy matter to grow religious as they grow old. But it is a way of arguing highly irrational and fallacious. For this is a maxim of eternal truth, that nothing grows weak with age but that which will at length die with age ; which sin never does. The longer a blot continues, the deeper it sinks. And it will be found a work of no small difficulty to dispossess and throw out a vice from that heart where long possession begins to plead prescription. It is naturally impossible for an old man to grow young again ; and it is next to impossible for a decrepit, aged sinner to become a new creature and be born again.



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